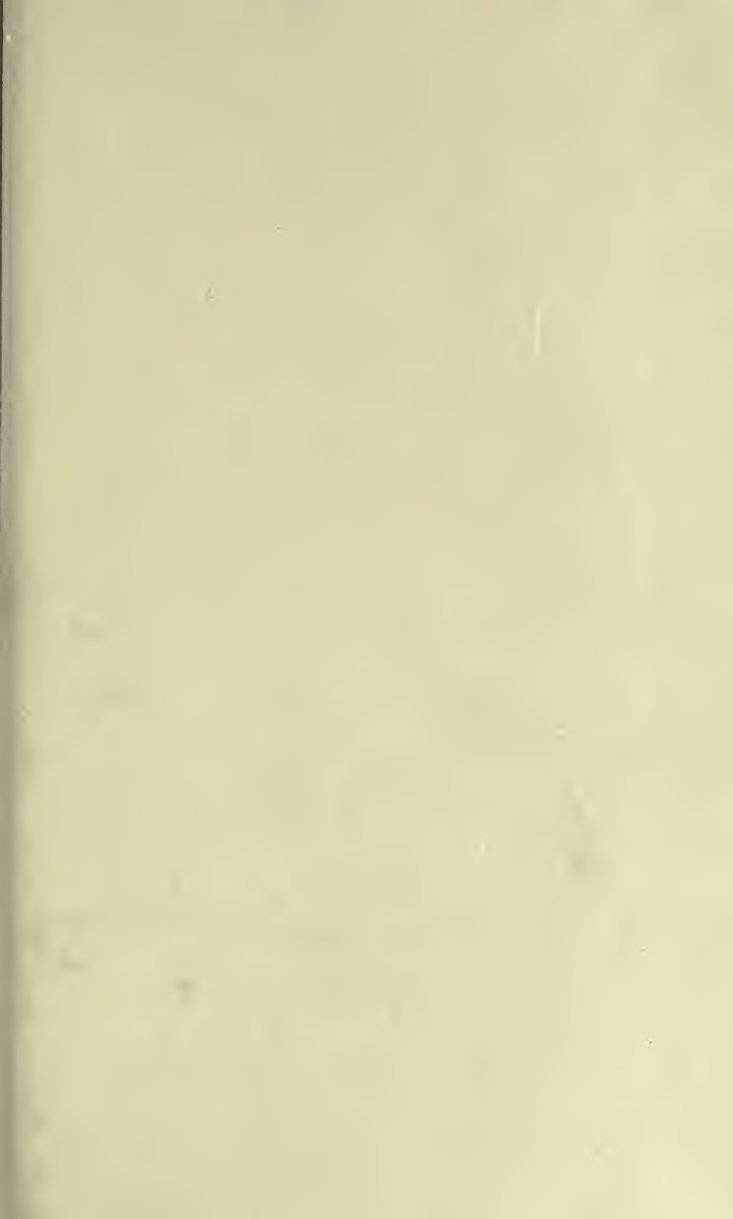


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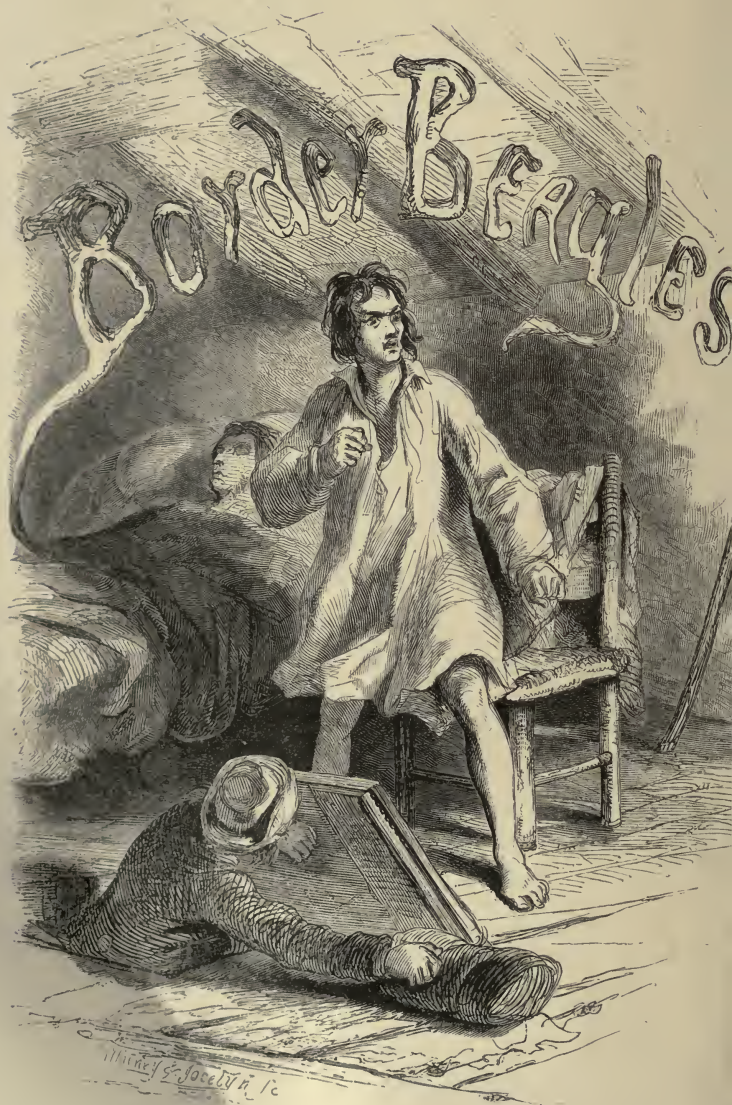




MRS. FOM. MOORE.







Whitely & Co. London

BORDER BEAGLES

A

TALE OF MISSISSIPPI

BY W. GILMORE SIMMS, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "RICHARD HURDIS"—"THE PARTISAN"—"MELLICHAMPE"—
"KATHARINE WALTON"—"THE SCOUT"—"WOODCRAFT." ETC

"So, at length,
The city, like a camp in mutiny,
Saw nothing else to walk her streets unharmed,
But these, your free companions."

VAN ARTEVELDE.

NEW AND REVISED EDITION



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District of New York.



TO
HON. JOHN A. CAMPBELL,
OF ALABAMA.

MY DEAR SIR—

It will not fall within your official province to consider the case of the BORDER BEAGLES *ads.* THE STATE; but you will suffer me to become the client of friendship, entreating as favorable a judgment, upon the reported case before you, as is consistent with critical justice and the rights of Literature.

Very truly, yours,

W. GILMORE SIMMS.

WOODLANDS, S. C.

October 1, 1855.

ADVERTISEMENT.

“RICHARD HURDIS” was held to be objectionable by many, if I may believe the language of the press, as too stern, gloomy and even savage of character. I know not how this may be, but I know that it was truthful, and drawn from the life. The story which succeeds, and which, in respect to the general material, is its proper sequel, may be held censurable as in the other extreme. But it is no less truthful. The history upon which it is founded, is beyond question, and I can confidently affirm that all the leading characters are drawn from the life. Even my actor, absurd as such a character may seem, emanating from the wild woods of Mississippi, is no less real as a personage than any of the rest. The levity is his, not mine. I can no more answer for his absurdities than I can excuse the gravity of the preceding work. Let the extremes neutralize each other. I am very sure that the anomalies and contradictions are none of mine. Nature has her sports, no less than Art, and it is in her extravagancies that Art must find her justification.

BORDER BEAGLES.

CHAPTER I.

COURT SEASON.

———"I have got
A seat to sit at ease here, in mine inn,
To see the comedy; and laugh and chuck
At the variety and throng of humors,
And dispositions that come jostling in
And out."—BEN JONSON.—*The New Inn.*

THE little town of Raymond, in the state of Mississippi, was in the utmost commotion. Court-day was at hand, and nothing was to be heard but the hum of preparation for that most important of all days in the history of a country-village—that of general muster alone excepted. Strange faces and strange dresses began to show themselves in the main street; lawyers were entering from all quarters—"saddlebag" and "sulky" lawyers—men who cumber themselves with no weight of law, unless it can be contained in moderately-sized heads, or valise, or saddle-bag, of equally moderate dimensions. Prowling sheriff's officers began to show their hands again, after a ten or twenty days' absence in the surrounding country, where they had gone to the great annoyance of simple farmers, who contract large debts to the shop-keeper on the strength of crops yet to be planted, which are thus wasted on changeable silks for the spouse, and whistle-handled whips for "Young Hopeful" the only son and heir to possessions, which, in no long time, will be heard best of under the auctioneer's hammer. The popu-

lation of the village was increasing rapidly ; and what with the sharp militia colonel, in his new box coat, squab white hat, trim collar and high-heeled boots, seeking to find favor in the regiment against the next election for supplying the brigadier's vacancy ; the swaggering planter to whom certain disquieting hints of foreclosure have been given, which he can evade no longer, and which he must settle as he may ; the slashing overseer, prime for cockfight or quarter-race, and not unwilling to try his own prowess upon his neighbor, should occasion serve and all other sports fail ; the pleading and impleaded, prosecutor and prosecuted, witnesses and victims—Raymond never promised more than at present to swell beyond all reasonable boundaries, and make a noise in the little world round it.

Court-day is a day to remember in the West, either for the parts witnessed or the parts taken in the various performances ; and whether the party be the loser of an eye or ear, or has merely helped another to the loss of both, the case is still the same ; the event is not usually forgotten.

The inference was fair that there would be a great deal of this sort of prime brutality performed at the present time. Among the crowd might be seen certain men who had already distinguished themselves after this manner, and who strutted and swaggered from pillar to post, as if conscious that the eyes of many were upon them, either in scorn or admiration. (Notoriety is a sort of fame which the vulgar mind essentially enjoys beyond any other ; and we are continually reminded, while among the crowd, of the fellow in the play, who says he "loves to be contemptible." Some of these creatures had lost an eye, some an ear ; others had their faces scarred with the strokes of knives ; and a close inspection of others might have shown certain tokens about their necks, which testified to bloody ground fights, in which their gullets formed an acquaintance with the enemy's teeth, not over-well calculated to make them desire new terms of familiarity. Perhaps, in most cases, these wretches had only been saved from just punishment by the humane intervention of the spectators—a humanity that is too often warmed into volition, only when the proprietor grows sated with the sport. All was crowd and confusion. At one moment the main street in Raymond was abso-

lutely choked by the press of conflicting vehicles. Judge Bunkell's sulky hitched wheels with the carriage of Colonel Fishhawk, and 'Squire Dickens' bran new barouche, brought up from Orleans only a week before, was "staved all to flinders"—so said our landlady—"agin the corner of Joe Richards' stable." The 'squire himself narrowly escaped the very last injury in the power of a fourfooted beast to inflict, that is disposed to use his hoofs heartily—and, bating an abrasion of the left nostril, which diminished the size, if it did not, as was the opinion of many, impair the beauty of the member, Dickens had good reason to congratulate himself at getting off with so 'little personal damage.

These, however, were not the only mishaps on this occasion. There were other stories of broken heads, maims, and injuries; but whether they grew out of the unavoidable concussion of a large crowd in a small place, or from a great natural tendency to broken heads on the part of the owners, it scarcely falls within our present purpose to inquire. A jostle in a roomy region like the west, is anything but a jostle in the streets of New York. There you may tilt the wayfarer into the gutter, and the laugh is against the loser, it being a sufficient apology for taking such a liberty with your neighbor's person, that "business is business and must be attended to." Every man must take care of himself and learn to push with the rest, where all are in a hurry.)

But he brooks the stab who jostles his neighbor where there is no such excuse; and the stab is certain where he presumes so far with his neighbor's wife, or his wife's daughter, or his sister. There's no pleading that the city rule is to "take the right hand"—he will let you know that the proper rule is to give way to the weak and feeble—to women, to age, to infancy. This is the manly rule among the strong, and a violation of it brings due punishment in the west. Jostling there is a dangerous experiment, and for this very reason, it is frequently practised by those who love a row and fear no danger. It is one of the thousand modes resorted to for compelling the fight of fun—the conflict which the rowdy seeks from the mere love of tumult, and in the excess of overheated blood.

If there was a sensation among the "arrivals" at Raymond.

there was scarcely less among the residents. The private houses were soon full of visitors, and the public of guests. Major Mandrake's tavern was crammed from top to bottom and this afflicting dispensation led to the strangest disruption of anciently adjusted beds and bedsteads. Miss Artemisia Mandrake, for example, was compelled to yield her cushions to a horse-drover from Tennessee, and content herself with such "sleeps" as she could find in an old arm-chair, that stood in immemorial dust in a sort of pigeon-roost garret. It was to this necessity, we may be permitted to say in this place, that she for ever after ascribed her rheumatism, and a certain awry contraction of the muscles of the neck, which, defeating her other personal charms, was not inaptly assumed, by the damsel herself, to have been the true cause of her remaining, up to the time of this writing, an unappropriated spinster. Major Mandrake has certainly had excellent reason to repent his cupidity.

The rival tavern of Captain Crumbaugh was in equally fortunate condition with that of the major. They were both filled to overflowing by midday, and after that you could get a bed in neither for love nor money. And yet the folks continued to arrive; folks of all conditions and from all quarters; in gig and sulky, or on horseback; some riding in pairs on the same donkey—and not a few short-petticoated damsels, led by curiosity, from the neighboring farms, and mounted in like manner, on battered jades, whose mouths, ossified by repeated jerks, now defied the strenuous efforts by which the riders would have sent them forward with some show of life and spirit, as they emerged from the forests into the crowded thoroughfare.

"Well, there's a heap of folks still a-coming, and where in the world they'll find a place to lie down in to-night, is a'most past my reckoning. I'm sure the major ha'n't got another bed left, high nor low; and as for the captain, I heard him tell Joe Zeigler an hour ago, that all was full with him. Yet, do look, how they are a-coming. Can't you look, Jack Horsey, if it's only for a minute. You hav'n't got no more nateral curiosity than—"

"Shut up, Bess, you've got enough for both of us. What's it to me, and what's it to you, where the folks sleep? Let

them sleep where they can; there'll be no want of beds where there's no want of money. If they have that, the captain and the major will take good care that they have every opportunity to spend it. As for you, go you and see after the poultry; court-time is a mighty bad season for chickens; they die off very sudden, and the owner is not always the wiser of the sort of death they die. Push, Bess, and see if you can forget for awhile the business of the two taverns."

The good wife was silent for a space, but this was the only acknowledgment which she condescended to yield her stubborn and incurious husband. She did not leave her place at the window, but continued to gaze with the satisfaction of a much younger person, at the throng in the thoroughfare, as it received additions momentarily from every new arrival. At length the stir appeared to cease—the carriages to disappear; horses vanished in the custody of bustling ostlers, and their riders, making amends for the day's abstinence, on a dry road, might be seen, in great part, at the bar-room of the major or the captain, washing away the dust from capacious throats by occasional draughts of whiskey or peach brandy.

The latter article seemed most in demand at the house of Captain Crumbaugh. He had the art of preparing it to perfection; and "Crumbaugh's peach" was, in my day, a sort of proverb with all who travelled in his parts. Major Mandrake took care to have the very best whiskey—of particular strength and peculiar flavor; and there was a class, and this no small one neither, that might readily be found to give it preference. I class myself among none of these. The oily excellence of the peach of Crumbaugh is still a flavor on "memory's waste;" (query, "taste?") and whiskey was never a favorite of mine, though I have partaken of it along with governors and judges, senators and saints.

But to return to the curious Mrs. Horsey. The dispersion of the crowd, as it ceased to furnish her with any new subjects of interest, necessarily left her somewhat more free to remember the injunctions of her husband; and she was about to turn from the window, with a long drawn sigh of weariness, or dissatisfaction that the show was over, when a smart-looking youth, whom she did not know, rode up to the door.

"Oh, Mr. Horsey—a gentleman—on a fine roan horse—he's at the door—I reckon he wants to see some of us, and maybe comes to look after a lodging for to-night. I knew the major was full, and the captain—"

"Now, the devil take the major and the captain, and all the taverns in the state, since they drive everything out of your brain that ought to be there," was the angry speech with which the stubborn husband interrupted the wandering soliloquy of his spouse. "Why don't you see what the stranger wants, woman?—you heard his knocking, and there you stand guessing about tavern business, and such matters as you've no need to think, much less to speak about."

"La! John Horsey—you're too positive and contrarious, not let a body think—"

"No! What the devil should you think for? that's my business, I tell you now, as I've told you a good hundred times before. But go to the door; don't stand there staring like a gray owl in a green bush; go and open the door and see what the man wants, unless you desire that I should get up with my lame leg and show him in. Won't you go, I ask you."

Well, John, don't you see I'm going? You're always in such a fret."

"Enough cause too, with such a trouble as you are."

"Yes, sometimes I'm anything but a trouble; there's no word you have too good for me; and then agin—"

"There's none too bad," said the splenetic husband, finishing the speech as she had begun it; "but go to the door, as if you had some life in you, or the stranger will batter it down before you get there."

There was some reason, indeed, for the apprehension expressed by Horsey, as the applicant for admission, seeing that no heed was given to his first summons, yet hearing, without doubt, a buzzing of the sharp controversy going on within, had renewed his application with redoubled force, employing for the purpose the butt of a loaded whip, every stroke of which told like a hammer upon the plank. The dame started in compliance with the clamors from without, rather than the impatient commands within; for she still seemed panting for another word, and muttered between her teeth, as she slowly moved

toward the door, something which, to the jealous authority of her liege lord, seemed to denote a resolution still to think as she pleased and when she pleased, in spite of his declarations against her right to do so.

"Look you, Bess, go to the door: and move a little more quickly, if you don't want to make me mighty angry. See what the stranger wants; and remember we don't keep a lodging-house any longer. We have no room; we want no company."

This was spoken in those subdued tones, and with that show of suppressed and striving feeling, which, perhaps, denote a greater degree of earnestness and resolution than any words might do. The effect upon the wife was instantaneous, and her hand was soon upon the lock.

"Remember, we have no lodging," murmured the husband, as the door opened. "I only wish I were a mile or two back in the woods, where I mightn't be worried as I am about board. There was a time when I might have been glad of a good stand on the road, but it's not so now. I can live like a gentleman, and why should I be bothered to get breakfasts, and see after strange horses, for people I shall never see but once, and don't want to see at all? I'll—"

The words of the stranger, spoken in bold, free, musical language, which reached the ears of the invalid at that moment, put an end to the soliloquy.

"Mrs. Horsey, ma'am?"

"He might swear to it, if he knew only half as much as I," exclaimed the invalid.

The stranger, a tall, well-made youth of twenty-five or thereabouts, meanwhile, drew up his steed, lifted his cap handsomely from his head, like one born a courtier, with a grace that found its way instantly to the lady's heart, and proceeded in his inquiries.

"I have been advised, Mrs. Horsey, by a particular friend, to seek lodgings at your house during my stay in Raymond. Can I have them?"

Before the good lady, prefacing her denial with a long apology and a pleasant smirk of the face, could bring out what she was preparing to say, the rough voice of the sultan from within, gave his answer to the stranger.

"Can't have 'em, my friend—this is no lodging-house—no room to spare."

"Very sorry, indeed," said the old lady.

"Not sorry at all, stranger," said the truth-speaking Horsey; "for you see, if we wanted to lodge you, the thing might well enough be done. But we don't set out to keep company, and there are taverns enough in the village."

"Scarcely, if the story is true that they are all full," replied the stranger; "but let me alight and see you. I have a message to you, madam, and to your husband from my friend Carter, who tells me that he lodges with you, and that you could easily find me lodgings, also, for the little time I mean to stay in Raymond."

The effect of this speech was instantaneous upon the man of the house. He barely heard the youth through ere he replied,

"Eh! what's that you say, my friend? Did you say Carter—was it Ben Carter that sent the message?"

"The same," replied the youth while entering the house.

"And why the d—l, stranger, didn't you say so at first, without any prevarications. What's the use of this cursed long palavar, when two words could have done the whole business. Of course we can give you lodgings. Ben Carter told you nothing but the truth. He has a habit of speaking the truth which would be very good for many other people to take up—not meaning you, stranger, for if you be a friend of Ben Carter, I reckon, it's like you are of the same sort of stuff."

"You speak only as my friend deserves, Mr. Horsey. Carter is the very man you describe him. True in all his words, and just in all his dealings with men, it is my pride in esteeming him one of the most valuable and closest friends I have. It is not amiss, Mr. Horsey, to add that he has an opinion of you, no less favorable than yours of him."

"Tush, young man, soft soap don't tickle me at my time of life," replied Horsey with an Indian grunt of seeming indifference. "I am as I am, and it's no great matter what I am, seeing that I'm of little use in this world at present, and likely to be of less; yet it's not a bad thing to have the good words of them that's good. It sort o' reconciles a man to a great many evil things that might otherwise bring him a mighty deal of

trouble. And Ben Carter is a good man—when did you see him last?”

“Some ten days ago. He left me at Monticello, and was on his way to Jackson, from which place he promised to return directly to this. He was to meet me here to-night.”

“Well, I reckon he’ll be as good as his word, if there’s nothing to stop him on the way. He’s mighty punctual to his business, and when he says he’ll do, you may count it done. True as steel, is Ben Carter, and it’s no use to say farther. Bess, let’s have something. What’ll you take, stranger?—there’s some mighty fine peach, some of Crumbaugh’s peach, as they call it, which is pretty much the same as calling it the very best in Massissippi. I have some old Monongahela besides, which I can speak a good word for—sugar, Bess.”

The beverage was soon prepared, and the two were about to drink, when Horsey reminded the other of a degree of inequality between them which needed to be reconciled before they could properly drink health together.

“You have all the advantage on your side, stranger; my name’s John Horsey—that, it seems, you know already; but yours—what’s your name? There’s no pleasure in calling a man ‘stranger’ every minute, when you’re talking and drinking together all the while.”

“True,” replied the stranger; “but I never thought of that. My name, Mr. Horsey, is Vernon—Harry Vernon. It is not improbable that you have heard it before from my friend Carter.”

“Don’t recollect—don’t think I ever did. Vernon, Vernon—it’s a good name enough—comes smooth and easy to the tongue as a gentleman’s name ought to do always; but Harry, Harry Vernon! You wasn’t christened Harry, I reckon, Mr. Vernon? Must have been Henry, and they call you Harry for short.”

“For short, say you? Well, it may be so,” replied the stranger with a laugh, “but long or short, I was never called by any other since I have known myself; and never, until this moment thought of asking which of the two I had the clearest right to make use of.”

“The old people living, Mr. Vernon? Your health, sir, in

the meantime. That's what I call peach brandy, sir—no make b'lieve—none of your whiskey run through peach timber such as they give you at Orleans. Old Crumbaugh warrants that stuff, and gets his price for it. Did I hear you, Mr. Vernon? the old people, you said they were living."

"Neither, sir."

"Try another sip, Mr. Vernon," said the other consolingly, "peach perfectly harmless; Crumbaugh keeps the temperance society house; warrants his peach; calls it sobriety peach; and so you've lost both parents, Mr. Vernon?"

"Both—all, sir. I may almost exclaim with the Indian, that there runs no drop of my blood in the veins of any human being."

"Don't say that, Mr. Vernon, don't say that. It's much more than any man can say, and be certain. (Fathers, sir, are apt to leave children where they never look for them;) there's something of that sort at my own door, Mr. Vernon, and so—"

"La, John, how you do talk."

"What, you're there, Bess, are you?" The chuckle of the veteran was arrested, and probably a long string of confessions, by the timely ejaculation of his wife, who happened to be busy in the closet—"these women, Mr. Vernon—but you're married?"

"No!"

"Be thankful, young master—it's a pleasure then to come, if it comes as a pleasure, which is something like Basil Hunter's pea crop, 'a very doubtful up-coming.' You will run your race like the rest of us, and come up at the post as usual, but it won't be the starting-post, I tell you! You was saying something about the Indians, and that brought up some recollections of mine when I was among them. I've been among all the Southern Indians, except the Catawba. I've never been among them, and I reckon there's but few of them now left to see; but I've been among the Creeks and the Cherokees, the Choctaws and the Chickasaws, and there was another tribe, when I first came into these parts, that I hear nothing of now, called the Leaf River Indians; there was but few of them, and I think they belonged to the Chickasaws, but they were the handsomest Indians I ever did see in all my travelling, and I

begun early. I used to trade, when I was little, a mere sprout of a boy, from Tennessee, through the mountains, into North and South Carolina—then, after that, to the Mississippi; and many's the time I've made out to carry a matter of five pack-horses—I, and three other lads of Tennessee—through the very heart of the 'nation,' without so much as losing a thimble, and almost without having a scare. In one of these journeys I saw my wife, then a mere bit of a girl.—What! not gone, Bess!—It's gospel truth, Mr. Harry Vernon, from that day there's been but one pack-horse in our family, and that's Jack Horsey himself."

"La! now, John," cried the wife with uplifted hands, "the stranger don't know your ways, and he'll take for true what you're a-telling him. That's jist the way with him, stranger—"

"Stranger!—the gentleman's got a name, Bess. Mr. Vernon, Mr. Harry Vernon; remember, now, it's not Henry; but Harry Vernon.—Mr. Vernon, this is my wife. You'd soon enough find that out, if you lodged with us awhile. And now, Bess, be off, and look after supper;—a silent wife, and a singing kettle—it's not always we can have 'em, Mr. Vernon, but that only helps to make them the more desirable."

Mrs. Horsey was not to be sent off, however, in so conclusive a manner. The complaints of Horsey, touching the constraints upon him of his better half, were ludicrous enough; contrasted, as they were, with the almost despotic sway which he exercised at every instant. Perhaps a latent desire to show her guest that her good lord did not have it altogether his own way, led her on this occasion to dispute his commands.

"It's not time for supper, John Horsey. Now that you're lame, you seem to think of nothing but eating and drinking."

"Did mortal husband ever hear to such a woman?" was the exclamation of the sultan. The wife mistook for compliance a mildness in the speech which was only due to the astonishment of the speaker. She continued:—

"It's a good hour to supper yet. We have our hours, John Horsey, jist the same as the major, and—"

"Now d—n the major, and d—n the captain, and d—n all the taverns in Massissippi. Thus it is, Mr. Vernon, a wife will make a man swear, sir, when there's nothing in the world

farther from his wish. You see, sir, my wife will do and say just what she pleases, as I told you. She will always be bringing up to me those cursed taverns; but I'll stop that, or there's no snakes! Look you, Betsey!"

Here his finger guided her to the door, through which she made her departure in the shortest possible space of time. A look had done what, probably, no word in John Horsey's vocabulary could have achieved half so soon.

"A good woman enough, Mr. Vernon; but women, sir, are women; and the very best of them are incapable of serious concerns: they are all triflers—mere children—a sort of gingerbread creatures, the ginger of which lasts on the tongue a deused sight longer than the molasses. But, as you were saying, Mr. Vernon, you are a lawyer."

"You have guessed rightly, sir, that is my profession indeed. Your ears are something better than mine, I think, for I do not recollect ever having told you the fact."

"Nor did you, my dear fellow," replied the old man with a hearty laugh. "It was, as you say, a mere guess of mine, and Jack Horsey's guess is seldom short of the mark. It's a way with me to take for granted, just as if my neighbor had said it, the thing which it appears to me reasonable to think he will say; and I could ha' sworn, from a rakish, sharp, lively something about your face and eyes, and a little swing of your shoulders, that you was a lawyer, or going soon to be one. You practise in Monticello?"

"I came from Monticello last, but it is not my residence."

"Well, but you practise law somewhere in Massissippi."

"I shall in season, I doubt not, provided I get clients. Young lawyers find in this their chief difficulty. They practise with some such rule as governs a good angler—where the fish bite best, there you are sure to find them. For my part, I am but too lately admitted to determine where the best water lies for my purposes; I have not yet thrown out my lines."

"And that you won't do till your hooks are well baited, for that I believe is one of the first lessons which a lawyer learns. I know'd if you had begun to practise, you hadn't done much in that way; your chin is almost too smooth, though that's no misfortune as times go, if so be your tongue proves smooth and

oily like your chin. But there, it seems to me, Mr. Vernon, that your difficulty lies. I'm afraid you ha'n't got the gift of the gab. I haven't heard you say much."

"And for a very excellent reason, Mr. Horsey: you haven't given me a chance. Your tongue has utterly outwagged mine, and I yield the palm to you, where my vanity, perhaps, would allow me to yield it to few other persons. But, it is now my turn, and if I do not prove myself quite your equal before I'm done with you, I will at least convince you that I am not entirely without my claims to take rank among the mouthing part of my profession."

"Spoken like a man, and a good fellow," cried Horsey with a hearty laugh, and with no sort of discomfiture at a retort as just as it was unexpected. "I have better hopes of you now, Mr. Harry Vernon. 'Ecod, you gave it me then—a raal dig in the side with a sharp elbow. The truth is, I am a leetle too much given to hearing myself talk, and what's worse, I can't easily be convinced that it is not my neighbor whose tongue all the while has been making the *hellabaloo*. Somehow or other, thinking of what the man ought to say, that I'm talking to, I come to think he says it, and half an hour after, could almost take my Bible oath to the fact. It's a strange infirmity, Mr. Vernon; don't you think so?"

"Very—very strange," said the other, smiling at the seeming seriousness of his companion.

"And so, you were telling me you practise law in Orleans."

"No—"

"Ah, Mobile, yes—Mobile you said."

"Nay, nay, Mr. Horsey, I said neither," replied the youth laughing out aloud; "this is only another sample of the infirmity you were telling me about—another of your guesses—and I will not tell you how far from the truth. But it is my turn now, and while I throw another stick upon your fire, and draw my chair a foot closer, I will prepare my thoughts for the cross-examination which I mean to give you in turn."

"Ah, well; but 'wait a bit and take a bit,' first, as we say in Massissippi. We'll have it over after supper, when you may try your skill upon me, for a first witness, and see what you will get for going. I'm a tough colt to ride, when the bit

hurts me; and he must be a skilful rider, indeed, if he saves himself a throw."

"We shall see, we shall see," said Vernon, confidently, and with a smile of good nature; while the old man, with whose humor the course which the youth had taken seemed admirably to tally, told him a dozen anecdotes of the young lawyers round about the country, with most of whom he had had sharp passes of wit, and in all cases, according to his own phrase and showing, had "come down uppermost."

CHAPTER II.

RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

"If you look in the maps of the 'orld, I warrant you shall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon, and there is also, moreover, a river at Monmouth; it is called Wye at Monmouth, but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but 'tis all one, 'tis so like as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both."

SHAKSPERE—*Fluellen.*

THE landlady spread her little board, on which a broiled chicken and sundry smoking slices of ham soon made their appearance. Chubby biscuits of fresh Pittsburgh flour, formed a pyramidal centre in the table arrangements, and a capacious bowl of milk stood beside them. Coffee, which is the *sine qua non* in a western supper, was of course not lacking; and appetite, that commends even the unflavored pulse and the dry roots, rendered necessary no idle solicitings to persuade our young traveller to do justice to a meal, in preparing which, the good hostess had spared nothing of her store.

"Fall to, Harry Vernon, and don't wait on me," was the frank command of Horsey, as, grunting and growling the while he worked his rocking chair, foot by foot, up to the side of the table, and drew from it one of the plates into his lap. Vernon had his good word for the hostess, and in a little time proved himself to be in possession of the best wisdom of the traveller

whom experience teaches, that good humor and a cheerful spirit are the most valuable companions which he can take with him in a course of western travel. We recommend them to all your ill-favored bookworms who carry their stilts with them into our swamps and forests, and fancy all the while that they can see anything, who never cease looking on their own pedestals.

Vernon had been already something of a wayfarer. Necessities of one sort or another, had schooled him into a knowledge of men of every sort, and it was a rational boast which he was sometimes wont to make, in the glow of a youthful and pardonable vanity, that he could go from Tampa bay to the Rocky mountains, and win good usage and a smile with his supper every night. Such a brag may be made by few with safety. Invidious comparisons constantly rise to our minds as we think of the little and peculiar luxuries of our homes, and we lose our appetite for that which is before us, by suffering our feeble fancies to trouble us with the memories of what we can not have. Your Englishman is a traveller of this sort. From the first jump which he makes from Dover, or Liverpool, he begins to smell out novelties which are always offensive to self-conceit, simply because they are novelties. His sole business from that moment, seems to be to discover in what things his present differs from his past, and to find fault and grumble accordingly. He turns up his nose with such an inveterate effort from the beginning, that it remains in that inodorous position for ever after.

But we have nothing now to do with him. Vernon, as we have said, was of very different temper; lively, bold, frank, generous, he was just the sort of person to commend himself to the southern and western people. His dignity, never apprehensive of doubt and denial, was never on the watch to take offence at everything in the least degree equivocal. To avoid controversy, to avoid the crowd, to yield gracefully in argument, and to forbear pressing his advantage at the proper moment—were some few of the maxims by which, avoiding every prospect of offence, he gained the most substantial victories, as well over the hearts as the understandings of those with whom he contended. Fluent in speech, with a memory abounding in illustration and anecdote, a fancy, lively and playful, an imagina

tion vigorous and bold, the profession which it seems he had chosen, appeared to be that in which, above all others, he promised most to excel. Such, we may add, was the opinion of his friends, and such, were it proper for the narrator to predict, was the appropriate event after the lapse of that usual period of probation, to which it is natural and well that all ambitious minds should be subjected. Precocious greatness is generally very short-lived.

There was that superiority in the mind of Harry Vernon, which never suffered him to think himself above the occasion. He could descend from the abstract to the practical with an ease and rapidity at once singular and successful. To rise from the actual to the abstract is a far easier matter, and hence it is that we have so many theoretical men, who always fail in the attempt to carry out their own principles. To accommodate himself to the understandings of those he addressed, without degrading his own, was another of those advantages—the result of actual experience in the busy world, which, added to the store of our young traveller, and supplied to him as it has supplied to others, in many instances, the lack of money and the aid of powerful friends. Before supper was fairly ended he had shown some of these possessions; and Horsey, the rough, garrulous, grumbling invalid, was not unwilling to hear another voice than his own occupy those intervals in the progress of the meal, which he had seldom failed to fill up hitherto from his own resources, and to his own perfect satisfaction. The youth requited him with story for story, joke for joke, and when, at the usual hour for retiring in the country, where folks are very apt to go to bed with the fowls, the worthy dame intimated to Vernon that his bed was ready whenever he wished “to lie down;” her spouse blazed out like a splinter of fat light-wood—bade her begone and not send the young man to bed at dark, to tumble about half the night in sleeplessness and stupor.

“That’s the way, Harry; and by the Lord Harry, it’s a monstrous vexing way my wife has got. She goes to bed at dark, you see; she’s kept up a little longer to-night than’s customary with her; and before day-peep she’s a-stirring, and a-tossing, and a-calling up the niggers. Now, you see, I can’t

sleep soon o' nights for the life of me. I never could ever since I was a lad driving my pack-horses over the mountains. 'Twas then I got a sort o' habit of sitting up late. When we'd come to a running water, or a spring, or some such fine place for a camp, why we'd drive stakes, cut bushes, make tents, and fasten our horses. Then we'd feed 'em, git up a fire, and set to preparing our own feed. Well, we'd have to do all this mightily slyly, I tell you, for fear of the Indians. We'd git away from the main track, hide our horses pretty deep in the small woods, and put our fire in a sort of hollow, so that nobody could see the blaze. Then we'd git round it, put down a hoe and a grid-dle, bake the biscuit and broil the venison. Ah! Vernon, it was mighty sweet eating in that fashion. There's no meal I ever ate that come up to them. And as we'd eat, we'd talk about what happened to this one, and what happened to that; and how many scares and dangers we'd had; and then we'd steal off, taking turns at that business, to look after the horses, and up and down the road, to see if all was right. And so we'd pass the night, Mr. Vernon; and in the morning, betimes, we'd brush up and gear the animals, and put on our packs, and be ready for a start by dawn; and many's the time, Vernon, my boy, in them days, that I've taken 'Sweetlips,' that ugly long-shanked rifle you see there in the corner, and dropped a turkey from his roost in the tree jist over the horses, so fat that his breast-bone split open by the time he thumped the ground. Ah! them days, Mr. Vernon, them blessed days, with all their troubles, and all their dangers, I'd give all I'm worth, or ever hope to be worth, if they only were to go over again. But it's no use pining for what can't be got. We can't always be young, Mr. Vernon, and if we could, pack-horses are gone out of use, and there's no Indians to make us lie snug and suspicious, telling stories that helped to frighten us the more. The Choctaws will soon be gone, and the Cherokees and Creeks, I s'pose, though they're something farther off, and I don't know so much about them. You can tell though, Mr. Vernon, seeing you're jist from Mobile."

Horsey, with an inevitable tendency, had recurred to his old practice. The youth replied good-humoredly:—

"I haven't seen Mobile for months, Mr. Horsey; but you

forget, it is my turn to question now, and lest you should start off, and throw me out again, I will begin at once. Have you had many visitors in Raymond—many strangers, I mean, until this time, within the last two weeks?"

"Psha, Harry Vernon, say what you want in plain terms. Is it a man, or a woman, you're in chase of? It's a man, I reckon; for Ben Carter an't the chap to encourage young lawyers to be running about the country after women. Am I right in my guess, Vernon?"

"Suppose I tell you, then, a woman?"

"Well, I've nothing to say; but I hardly think it. Are you sure it's a woman, now?"

"Nay, there's no certainty about it. A small man in woman's clothes, might very easily pass himself off for one," said Vernon, with an air of musing.

"Yes, nothing very strange in that, if he had to make a run for it, and had hope of outdoing his enemy's head sooner than his heels. Your chap has no such hope, I reckon, Mr. Vernon."

"It may be not; but man or woman, Mr. Horsey, have you had any strangers in the village lately?"

"Well, I'm the very last person in Raymond to see strangers, unless they come to me. I ha'n't walked out of the house for the last five weeks, and jist make out to hobble up to bed, when it's time to lie down. There's my wife, now—she can tell you more than I. She sees everything and everybody, I think, that comes into the village; I don't know but she sees whoever goes out of it. She's a most curious woman—my wife—likes to pry into everybody's business, and know all about them, but she means no harm; good woman—she's fast asleep now."

A hearty laugh of Vernon followed these praises of the wife, which she was no longer in a condition to hear; and drawing nigher to his companion, he renewed his inquiries, though with a slight change of topic.

"Your wounded limb disables you from seeing much of the world at present, Mr. Horsey, but it has not always disabled you, and there are some parts of it which I know you have seen, about which I would like to obtain some information—the 'Choctaw purchase' for example."

"How do you know I've been in the 'nation'?" demanded Horsey with some gravity.

"You told me so yourself."

"The d—l I did! Can it be possible! Well, it is strange how difficult it is, when a man's growing old, for him to keep his own secrets. Out he pops with everything he knows, and with the help of a long tongue, he will empty the longest head. Are you sure I told you I had been in the 'nation' Mr. Vernon?"

"I think so, sir."

"You are not certain, then. It is very probable you are mistaken, sir. I should wish to think so, for I look upon it as one of the last signs of dotage when a man can't keep his secrets."

"But this is no secret, surely. Can there be any harm in stating so simple a fact," demanded the youth, with curiosity mingled with amusement to discover in a man of so much good practical sense, an apprehension so ridiculous.

"So simple a fact has hung a man before to-day, as your law books should have told you. Not that I fear to be hung for anything I've done, whether among Creeks, Cherokees, or Choctaws. I've had something to do with all of them in my time, and can show some marks of my acquaintance with the red rascals; but then there's no sort of need to tell everything a man knows, even when it does him no harm to tell it; and when a man's brains become like a bottle of sassafras beer, ready to boil over when a little warm, I think he may as well cast up his accounts, and get his coffin made. But, sir, I have been in the 'purchase' and maybe can tell you what you want to know."

"To what portions do the people go who settle there now? Which are the portions most in demand?"

"Oh, there's a sprinkling of our people everywhere, there's no stopping them when they begin. When you think you've got to the eend of the settlements, there's still some farther on; and the business of the squatter always carries him over the line of the old settlements. But the quiet folks that have got something to go upon and something to lose, they stick a little behind. It does seem to me, that, if it's them you're asking for, you'll find a smart chance of them between the Yazoo and

the Big Black, mostly along the edges of the Big Black, and not often west of the Yazoo. A heap of little towns are growing up along the Black. I could name to you a dozen, but it's no more use naming little towns than little chickens, there's so many of them, and they all look so much alike."

"And the gamblers, Mr. Horsey, where do they keep?"

"Nowhere in particular, and that's the same as saying everywhere. But—I needn't ask you, seeing you're Ben Carter's friend—I was going to say I hope you wasn't looking after company among them."

"No, no; but they are numerous?" demanded the youth with interest.

"As peas in a fair season."

"They are audacious, too?"

"D—d infernal impudent, if you let them. If you go up in those parts it's my advice to you to keep finger on trigger and use your pistol at a word. It's a'most always the quickest hand that gets off with fewest scratches, and to stand palaver-ing with a scoundrel, that you know to be a scoundrel, about what's right, and what's not right, is, to my way of thinking, little better than begging an ass not to kick you, while you make a slow journey under his heels."

"But you're not always sure that it is a scoundrel—"

"Sure as a gun; there's no chance of a mistake if you keep your senses about you. But that's the trouble. It's how to keep your senses about you, Harry Vernon, that's the greatest question. Now, I'm clear to say, that it's only by getting drunk, being put in a passion, or having soft soap poured down their backs, that men lose their senses, and afterward lose everything beside. If they wouldn't listen to smooth words from every stranger they meet; if they wouldn't stop to hug the whiskey bottle, instead of taking a quiet kiss and walking on; if they wouldn't get into a passion about every fool speech they hear, then I'm clear, they'd never get cheated out of their money, and knocked on the head, like a blind puppy in a dark night. Now, Harry, you see the danger before you. So long as a man keeps his senses, there's not so many dangers in life, and they may be all got over by a quick head and bold heart. But it won't do to believe in sweet-spoken strangers, and it

won't do to quarrel about a fool jest, and it won't do to get drunk. I wouldn't advise a lad to go up into the Yazoo, now, while it's unsettled, as I may say, and none but scatterers about; but if you must go, mind your own business, make no more friends than you can help, and keep sober as a judge. Come, sir, you've been talking long enough, let's have a toddy."

"Thank you—no more, Mr. Horsey; and let me correct your errors as we proceed. It is you and not I who have been doing the talking for the last half hour; and to say truth, I am so well pleased with your eloquence, that I'm for having more of it."

"No gammon, my lad, none of that. But I'm willing to tell you all I know, so long as you don't ask for it all. What's next?"

"What officers of the law may be found in those parts, in the event of my being in want of them?"

"Lord keep you from law officers in your own case, my lad, though as a lawyer, it's like enough, you'll be making them toil hard enough in the business of other people. But what makes you think of them—do you calculate on any trouble?"

"Nay, that matters not, my friend. Should I have any trouble, which a man of the world, who lives in the world, must always look for, I should like to know in how much I may depend upon the countenance and protection of the law in the places to which I'm going."

"Depend upon a hickory sapling and your own teeth rather. Depend upon steel and bullet, Harry Vernon, when you're on the Yazoo. What the d—l would a man expect to find out, away on the very outskirts, as I may call it, of civilization? Would you have gentlemen and Christians in a part of the world where there's no timber cut, no lands cleared, no houses built, nothing done, but what's done by the squatters and that sort of people? No, no; your only chance is a keen eye, a quick hand, and a steady head. Trust to these in the Yazoo; there are few better friends anywhere."

"The counsel of one who has certainly done more by their help than most men," responded Vernon, with a compliment that was not displeasing to the veteran, and showed a degree of intimacy with his history on the part of his guest, which

proved him to have been no inattentive auditor of himself and of his friend Carter; "but," continued the youth, "what can you tell me of the 'Braxley settlement'?"

"Not a syllable—I know nothing good of it, however; though I couldn't say, more than from general report, anything bad agin it."

"What of 'Ford's camp'?"

"Nothing."

"Georgeville?"

"That's sprung up into a village since my day. I believe it's a poor affair: but two or three stores or thereabouts. I never saw the place but once, and then there was but one; I didn't stay in that longer than to take a sup of whiskey. If there's nothing better in it than the whiskey, don't go there. It's a place to shun, Mr. Vernon."

"What of Lexington?"

"Don't know the place."

"Squab Meadow?"

"Never heard of it."

"There's a little village called Lucchesa, that lies somewhere upon Green Briar Creek in Carroll county. Do you know anything about that? it's a new village."

"New to me, yet I think I have heard the name; there are several little villages grown up since I've been in those parts, and, for that matter, they grow up every day. I know the country well enough, but, bless your soul, Mr. Harry Vernon, it's no sign of ignorance in Massissippi, not to know the towns by their names. We can't find names for half of 'em."

This was said with some signs of impatience, and the youth, though still seemingly desirous of pressing for information which was yet desirable to obtain, was compelled to rest contented with the imperfect statistics already gleaned, which, perhaps, no continued examination of the old man would have rendered more complete.

"I am afraid I have wearied and worried you, Mr. Horsey, without much help to myself. What I get from you is to the full as satisfactory as the comparisons of that categorical personage, Captain Fluellen; 'There is,' says he, 'a river in Macedon, and there is also, moreover, a river at Monmouth,' &c."

The youth gave in full the passage which has been prefixed as an epigraph to this idle chapter, and which we care not to repeat again. Portions of the quotation, however, and the authority referred to, seemed to disquiet our landlord.

"Fluellen," said he; "where was he captain? There's Captain Fenelon, I know, that heads the 'Buck Swamp Rangers,' and that's the nearest name to it, I can think of. I know Fenelon, and a mighty clever fellow he is; a little too fond of the girls perhaps; but that only hurts himself. It isn't him, you mean."

"No, no—Fluellen is a captain far more famous, I think, than Fenelon will ever become. He is one of the honored names of Shakspeare—the world renowned—"

"That d—d player-man!" cried the impatient landlord, interrupting the eulogy which our hero had begun, of the merits of the divine bard. "Look you, Mr. Vernon, if you want that we should keep friends, and part friends, say no more of that player-fellow and his cursed books; don't I beg you."

The youth was silent from wonder for a few moments, to behold such an earnest countenance as the speaker wore while he uttered this serious remonstrance. When he recovered breath it was to expostulate.

"In the name of wonder, and all the wonders, Mr. Horsey, but how is this? How is it that you are so hostile to a writer whom all the world joins to honor and applaud?"

"The world, Mr. Vernon, may honor as it pleases, and it frequently gives honor where very little is due. But it's the honor which the world gives to this same player-fellow, which has done more to make me an unhappy man, than anything in the world beside."

The wonder of the youth increased, and a single word conveyed his farther interrogation:—

"How?"

"I have a son, Mr. Vernon; you haven't seen him in my house; nor, till this minute, have you heard his name from my lips; nor, perhaps, from the lips of Ben Carter, though you may have got a good deal out of him. Well, sir, this son of mine, got in with some of these player fellows at Mobile or Orleans, and they carried him to their blasted stage-houses, where

he got possession of these Shakspeare books, and he's never been worth a picayune since that day. He took up with the stage-fellows, got to making a d—d fool of himself before the Mobile people, and had the impudence to send me a paper, a printed paper, with a great heading, and his name among the rest to play some pieces out of Shakspeare. Sure enough, that very time my neighbor here, Major Mandrake, that keeps one of the taverns, being down on a visit to Mobile, saw Tom Horsey, with his own eyes, come out in front of the whole people, with a gold crown upon his head, and covered with spangles, and dressed up, in a most ridiculous way beside, jist for another chap, who come out afterward, to stick him with a sword. And there he rolled about over the floor, until he died, and the people shouted and clapped their hands, as if he had done some great thing, and it was jist that d—d stupid shouting and clapping, that led the fellow to make such a bloody fool of himself. But mind you, I don't mean to say that he died in airnest—it was all pretence—all make b'lieve; but, by the Eternal, Mr. Vernon, I'd rather a thousand times he had died in raal airnest, in a fair fight, than to have fallen into such a folly, and brought disgrace upon his family."

A playful commentary upon this speech rose to the lips of Vernon, as the old man concluded; but the youth saw that the grief was too serious and sacred, to suffer any light or irreverential remark. He contented himself with inquiring into the fate of a lad in whom he begun to take some interest, the rather, perhaps, because he saw the matter in a less severe light than the father, and possibly because he thought that the backwoods boy, wanting in all the advantages of education and city life, who could relish Shakspeare to so great a degree, must be of something more than ordinary metal.

"And where is your son now, Mr. Horsey?"

"The saints know best, Mr. Vernon. Tom Horsey has not darkened these doors since March gone was a year."

"But you hear from him?"

"Ay, sir, and of him. I hear from him when he wants money, and of him when he has it. He makes me hear when he's out, and makes everybody else hear when his pockets are full. The misfortune is, that this Shakspeare fellow never comes

alone. He brings with him late hours and strong drink, and damned bad company, Mr. Vernon; and what with him and them, Tom Horsey is in the broad road to destruction."

"But do you provide him with money when he demands it for such indulgences."

"Fill your glass, Vernon; let us drink, and say no more. I'm a surly, crabbed sort of creature; they will all tell you so; and yet, they all wonder, and I wonder at it myself, that I have so little strength to do the things that I resolve upon. The boy's my only boy, bad as he is; Harry Vernon; and he gets more money from me than I ought to give him. But, what's that? Did you hear nothing, Mr. Vernon?—no voices—none—just below the window?"

The old man trembled with sudden agitation, while bending forward to listen, as indistinct accents fell upon his own and the ears of his guest.

In another instant, the room rang with a loud burst of declamation from without, in which Vernon detected some lines from the bard whom the old man had so terribly denounced, but which now seemed to awaken in his mind any other than hostile feelings. Meanwhile the voice proceeded, and the passages spoken seemed not inappropriate; and, perhaps, were chosen from their partial fitness, to those relations between father and son, which had formed the subject of the previous conversation. The passage was from the speech of Bolingbroke, third scene, fifth act, of *Richard the Second*:—

"Can no man tell of my unthrifty son?

'Tis full three months since I did see him last:

If any plague hang over us, 'tis he.

I would to heaven, my lords, he might be found;

Inquire at London, 'mongst the taverns there,

For there, they say, he daily doth frequent,

With unrestrained, loose companions," &c.

The eye of the father caught the glance of his guest earnestly fixed upon him, and in that instant he recovered his composure.

"Now, out upon the scrub! he comes at last, with his player-verses in his mouth—"

"Ay; but how truly do they suit, Mr Horsey!" was the reply of Vernon.

"Yes, indeed, well enough; but will they cure the mischief that they tell of? No, sir; this graceless rascal thinks it handsome to swagger with a belly full of whiskey, and a brain full of Shakspeare, at the lowest tavern in the city of New Orleans. By the Lord Harry, but he comes not in my door!"

A loud knocking from without answered this resolve; and, following the glance of the father's eye, Vernon rose quietly and opened the door to the son.

CHAPTER III.

FATHER AND SON.

"This fellow I remember
Since once he play'd a farmer's eldest son;
'Twas where you wooed the gentlewoman so well;
I have forgot your name; but sure that part
Was aptly fitted, and naturally performed."—SHAKSPEARE.

THE prodigal waited for no invitation to enter, but bounced in, the moment the door was opened. Seeing the stranger, he stopped short for an instant, his deportment bearing equal marks of confident assurance, and a reasonable consciousness of his own demerits. The habits of the player-men, however, got the better of his misgivings, and, without yielding any farther notice to Vernon, after the first glance, he advanced toward the father, prefacing his movement with a hearty salutation, of somewhat rowdy fashion, which made the old man wince in his seat, at the gross disregard of his dignity which it betrayed.

"Ha, dad! there you are, prime and hearty, as though you never had a son, to 'bring you cares for inconsiderate youth,'—and how's the old lady, 'our venerable mother, keeps she well?' gone to bed, I reckon, and fast; so I take it for granted she's as she should be, and you, sir, you and—"

Here his eyes wandered to the seat which Vernon had re-occupied.

"Puppy!" exclaimed the father. "can't you leave off your

cursed player nonsense, Tom Horsey, when you're in a gentleman's presence. That, sir, is my friend, Mr. Vernon, Mr. Harry Vernon, of Natchez, or New Orleans, or elsewhere."

"Sir, Mr. Vernon, of elsewhere, I am glad to know you. 'If I mistake not, thou art Harry Monmouth,'" was the prompt address of the actor, extending his right hand, with an air of princely condescension.

"Monmouth, no!" cried the more literal father; "Vernon, I said, Tom Horsey—Mr. Harry Vernon."

"The same—a good name, I think, sir, a very good name, and I'm glad to know you. Mr. Vernon, as I said before, 'there's matter in this;' and, some allowances must be made for the prejudices of age, and a hard school, sir, against the drama. It is only in the presence of gentlemen, sir,"—to his father—"let me tell you, that players should speak. The very element they live in, sir, is the applause of the gentle and the wise—their pursuits are 'caviare to the general;' and let me tell you, sir, that you risk not a little when you give way to this harsh and most unjust manner of speech, in respect to a profession, whose ill report while you live, it is said, will do you more harm than a bad epitaph when you die. You will find the passage in Hamlet—for the rest, sir—have you anything to drink?"

This speech was pretty evenly divided between the father and his guest. When it was concluded, he turned to the little table that stood between the elder Horsey and Vernon, filled a glass for himself, and drawing a chair from the corner of the apartment, placed himself, with a show of *sang froid*, which was not altogether felt, directly beside the father. The old man could no longer restrain his indignation.

"You d—d conceited squab, where have you been these eight months? Put down your glass, sir, until you answer me."

"Dry throats must needs make short speeches, sir—I have been at school."

"Do not mock me, Tom Horsey!—don't go too far, boy, in playing your d—d theatre stuff on me. I can't bear it much longer—you'll put me in a rousing passion."

"We'll have a rouse to-night, sir—Mr. Vernon, 'the king drinks to Hamlet.' Don't think, sir," addressing his father

"don't think, I shall forget you, dad, but your glass remains unfilled. Shall I help you?"

"Help yourself and be d—d. Answer my question. Where have you been these eight months?"

"Egad, sir, that's the most puzzling of all questions, and the most correct answer that I can make you is that which I have made already. At school, sir! In the great school of the world, sir, I have been acquiring my humanities or getting rid of them. Don't you think me reasonably improved?"

"What have you done with the money I sent you?"

"Paid my schooling with it, sir."

"That is to say, you drank it out at taverns upon your roaring companions, your drunken actors, your bully gamblers, and all that strange sort of cattle that you herd with in Orleans."

"Alas! my father, revile not thus. Wherefore will you speak of things which you know not. Have more charity, I pray you. As for the poor sums of money which you sent me, they were as nothing to the good which they procured me. They brought me to a knowledge of the fine generous spirits, who are as much above the dirty wants and slavish necessities of common clay, as the divine Shakspeare is beyond all the thousand priests and pretenders that officiate at the altar of the muse. Had you sent me ten times the sums you speak of, I had freely shared them all with the noble fellows whom your parsimony has chiefly compelled me to leave."

"Ay, and where would their generosity have carried you, you ridiculous spendthrift. To the calaboose, to the calaboose, you rascal. If it has not already carried you there. Pitiful sums indeed!—but you sha'n't impose on Mr. Vernon. You shall say what these pitiful sums are; you shall tell him what money I sent you, and let him say whether I have not been almost as great a spendthrift as yourself."

"No doubt, no doubt—I make no question, dad, but that your extravagance has always exceeded mine. I am but a chip—a small chip of the old block; and—"

"Why, you impudent rascal, my spendings have been altogether on you. If I have to reproach myself with any extravagance at all, it is only in having given you the means to make a fool of yourself."

“‘Wisely, indeed, and worthily bestowed’—you do not repent, sir, of having provided for my subsistence?”

“I have done more, sir. What amount did I send you by Bill Perkins?”

“Some fifty or a hundred dollars, as I think.”

“As you think! as you think! Tom Horsey, will you lie too? Have your player-fellows taught you this among their other accursed lessons. Speak, are you in earnest?”

The old man’s voice trembled, and passion seemed to be succeeded in his choking utterance by a fear that falsehood was to be included among the other profligacies of one whom his own tenderness had rendered somewhat incorrigible. Vernon watched the scene with curious interest, and he remarked the sudden flush which mounted up into the son’s cheeks at the accusation, as if conscious innocence revolted within him at the injustice. Such was the impression of the spectator, and it was confirmed by the effect which it seemed to produce in the youth’s tone and general manner.

“You are a little too hard with me, sir,” was his reply. “I admit that you sent me some money by Perkins.”

“Three hundred, not fifty, sir—not fifty or a hundred, but three hundred dollars, Tom Horsey.”

“Right, sir; Perkins brought me that sum, which I trust you did not really think me base enough to deny. When I said less I simply meant to compute it by the time it lasted. It was the very sum you name, sir, but it might just as well have been the fifty—it was very short-lived.”

“Very well, sir,” said the father, glad to have an excuse to forbear reproach and harsh language. “And had it been fifty times as much, do you think it would have lasted much longer with such company as you keep? No, sir, they would have spent my gains and your gettings, and counted my thousands as you have learned to do by fifties and hundreds. But that’s not all. You got money from my factor in Orleans. What sum got you? for to this day I have never learned.”

“I sent you two thousand dollars by Major Mandrake.”

“I got it, but the crop sold for more, sir—cotton was selling at sixteen; I had the price current of the week, and have it now. What did my cotton bring? You sent

me the money but no account of sales; what was done with that?"

"'Gad, sir, I know not, unless we used it to make snow one night at Caldwell's when the storm gave out. I remember, we were rather short of snow."

"Tom, Tom, don't rouse me—don't put me in a passion. I'm sick—I can't bear it easily; and besides, I don't want Mr. Harry Vernon to see what a d—d fool I am to let you treat me as you do. What did you get from my factor in all? let me know that. You sent me two thousand—what did you keep?"

"Well, sir, as nearly as I can remember, about seven hundred—"

"Seven hundred!"

"There may have been a forty or fifty tacked on to it; but it certainly was not more than that. Suppose we call it seven hundred and fifty dollars—'the very head and front of my offending, hath this extent, no more.'"

"And enough too, in God's name, to ruin any man that's got so little to go upon as I," responded the father; "but there is more, Tom Horsey—you took a hundred and seventy dollars with you when you went; you collected ninety dollars from Michael Hopper for so many bushels of corn; and what have you done with Martin Groning's note for sixty-seven dollars? If you got that, it makes—"

"But I haven't got that, dad. Groning's a great rascal; 'there must be lawings ere you get that gold'—we shall have to set Master Phang upon him, dad, before he settles."

"No, let him go. It's but a poor sixty-seven dollars, and I shouldn't miss so small a matter, if my own son didn't help me to the loss of a great deal more. But now count up, count up, Mr. Vernon, these moneys, as I call them out to you, and then say whether I'm parsimonious, or whether there's a spendthrift in my family, that'll let out at a thousand mouths what his father was compelled to take in at one."

"Nay, don't count up, I beg you, dad," cried the profligate; "why will you bother Harry Monmouth with these 'small chores.' To count up money that you have not, is to impoverish memory most cursedly. The very thought of my spendings is a misery, since it only the more forcibly reminds me of

the little that is left to spend. Wherefore have I left my company, 'my comrades in exile,' but that the candle was at the last snuff—wherefore have I trudged homeward 'on weary legs—' "

"You don't mean to say that you walked from Orleans here, Tom Horsey?" cried the father, to whom the last fragment of a quotation uttered by his son suggested a new cause of apprehension.

"Not all the way. I had a cast in a steamboat as far as Monticello, and a fling in a wagon for some twelve or fourteen miles above; but, by the Lord Harry, the widow's mare did the rest."

"Why, where's your horse?"

"Gone—gone the way of all flesh."

"Dead—how was that—the botts?"

"Ay, botts enough to take off a dozen horses. The sheriff suspected I was out of money, and not able to keep him any longer; and so relieved me of the charge."

"Seized for debt!" exclaimed the father aghast; "a colt of my own raising—seized for debt!—eat his head off in a livery stable!—ah, Tom, Tom! you'll kill me yet!"

"At the suit of one Stubbs, a tailor; a fellow that helped me to fit up my wardrobe, and brought suit for all his suits. Thus was I nonsuited. But I punished the scoundrel, you may be sure. I basted him with his own yard-stick the night I left Orleans, till there wasn't a seam in his carcass that couldn't count stitches. You shall hear particulars some day, Harry Monmouth; a devilish good story—but—"

"Look you, Tom, this gentleman's name is Vernon, and not Monmouth. None of your tricks, I tell you."

"Vernon, is it? I ask pardon, but I thought it was Monmouth—Harry Monmouth—it was Harry you said—I'll swear to that."

"You've a free tongue to swear, Tom Horsey; but how would you like an oath of mine to cut you off with a shilling, and leave you to the miserable life you have so miserably begun. Answer me that, sir: what would you think of such an oath? and wouldn't it be justly deserved, Mr. Vernon?"

"Nay, father, do not bother Mr. Vernon any more in this matter, and above all matters eschew the sin of swearing."

Oath-taking is a bad business, and unless you take some such rash oath as that you speak of, I think I may promise you with safety to do nothing again rashly as long as I live. I am come home to be a sober fellow, follow the plough, drive the wagon, bleed horses, and cure bacon. In short, do just whatever is needful to make money, and keep it afterward."

"Can you keep to this?" cried the delighted father, who desired nothing more than such a concession on the part of his son, as should save his dignity, and obviate the necessity of more scolding.

"I think so—I'll try, sir."

"Ah, Tom, for awhile only, I'm afraid. You'll be reading in the newspaper about some new play-house or some new actor, and then, nothing will suit, but off you must go to see for yourself; as if the reading of it wouldn't do as well."

"It shall—it shall in future, dad. Don't be afraid of me. I think I shall keep my promises this time, for, do you see, whatever might be my own desires to go to Orleans, the drubbing I gave the tailor, Stubbs, will stand against me in the black books of the law, and I have too great a respect for that stately dwelling, the calaboose, to risk the chances of admission. As for the theatre itself, by my fears, I have just as little reason to venture near it. My chance is all up with the American, and my hopes with Caldwell; but for that, dad, it might have been, that you hadn't seen me home to-night."

"Well, whatever it was, I'm glad it happened so; but you don't mean, Tom, that you quarrelled with the actors."

"Ay, with the very chief of them—the manager."

"Well, the stars be thanked, I'm a great deal gladder than before. There's no fear of making up the matter, Tom, is there?"

"But little, unless you lend your help."

"God forbid! I lend my help!—I'd burn down all their establishments, if I could. But how was it, Tom—what was the quarrel? You didn't lick him, too, as well as the tailor?"

"Egad, no! The boot was on t'other leg! It was because I didn't lick him, that we quarrelled; it was, by my soul!"

"Come, come, Tom, don't, now; none of your d—d nonsense. We know it's all gammon that! No man would quarrel with another because he didn't lick him."

"True as gospel, dad, professionally speaking. An excellent adventure, by the way, Mr. Vernon, and I must tell it. Dad, fill your glass!—an excellent joke—fill, Mr. Vernon! You shall hear how I came over the manager—how I struck him, even when 'soaring in his pride of place.'"

"I thought you said you didn't strike him, Tom?" demanded the matter-of-fact father.

"You shall hear, sir. Understand, you are at the American Theatre in New Orleans, Caldwell, manager; and your humble servant doing third and fourth-rate characters at tenth-rate prices. Ten dollars a week is scarcely enough for gentlemen of my cloth; and just at this time Stubbs was writing to me in the very language of Master Shallow, 'I beseech you, Sir John, let me have five hundred of my thousand,' in other words, of less classical grace—'let me have but half of my bill.'"

"Drop the theatre talk, Tom," whispered the father; "drop it, d—n you, if you can."

"It was necessary to remit, to raise the wind. This was the difficulty. I had got rid of the seven hundred, and the three hundred, and the other odd hundred; and I had even drawn the week's salary in advance. I had the horse, it is true, but the colt was a favorite—I had helped to raise it; and, by Jupiter, I had much sooner have parted with my velvet plush breeches, than with Corporal."

The old man gave an approbatory chuckle as this show of proper feeling escaped his son in his narrative.

"But you should have gone to the factors, or wrote to me for the money, Tom, and redeemed the nag. I'd rather than twice his value that you had not lost him."

The son winked to Vernon, as he replied—

"Ah, dad, Stubbs is not the only tailor in Orleans; and one suit is not all that a poor devil actor has to suffer before his wardrobe's complete. As I was saying, I knew of no present mode of raising the wind, and I had but one mode left me. I went to the manager, implored him for a loan, on the strength of future services. He denied me; 'but was I to be denied?' You shall hear how I fixed him. That very night I was to play Richmond to his Richard. The manager had a very strange notion that he was a tragedian, and was, therefore,

continually going out of his element, to try waters which were quite beyond his depth. He did well enough as a genteel comedian, but that did not satisfy his ambition; and among those who knew nothing better, he did monstrous well. I remember the first time I ever saw him was in tragedy. I went to Orleans, dad, if you remember, with uncle Wat Stevens, and he treated me to the show."

"Damn him for it," was the fervent ejaculation of the father. The son proceeded without heeding the interruption.

"Like the rest of the gaping countrymen around, and the house was full of them, I thought him a wonderful man, though I soon learned other things when I looked a little more into the matter. But the opinion of the manager himself underwent no change. He was still ripe for tragedy and nothing else, and was that very night, when Stubbs sent me his impudent letter, to play Richard—I, Richmond. We went through the piece very well, till we got to the death scene. Then Richard tried his best, and I buckled to him. I had wounded him, and he had fallen; but that was nothing to a man determined to outdo Kean, and make the ghost of Garrick gape with astonishment, and shiver in his shroud. He rolled and writhed about the stage, keeping up the fight as he did so, and striving to show his skill of fence while in the death agony. It was then that the thought seized suddenly upon me to avail myself of the particular predicament in which he stood—lay rather—to bring him to an accommodation—to compel him to my own terms. What do you think I did, Harry Monmouth—Master Vernon, I mean—how do you think I fixed him? A thousand to one you can neither of you guess."

Vernon confessed his inability, and the father, now an attentive auditor, and a pleased one too, as he beheld the evident attention of his guest, and observed the more modest demeanor of his son, disclaimed with equal readiness any ability to conjecture the *ruse de guerre* made use of by the debtor to extort from the dying actor, the loan he found necessary to keep him from his tailor's clutches.

"I knew it—I knew it was beyond you both," was the chuckling response of Richmond to these admissions. "It was a thought of my own, and my own only; and what was it, you

will ask. Hark ye then in your ears; it was simply to forbear killing him. I began to play slowly, to evade his strokes and avoid pursuit of him. You may imagine the predicament of Richard, half-dead, and inviting the fatal blow. He called to me in a hoarse whisper, while twisting and writhing after me, and sticking right and left, at moments when, in order to keep up appearances with the audience, I suffered our swords to mingle.—‘Why the devil don’t you play, Horsey?’”

“I answered him in a suppressed voice, speaking in the gorge of my throat, so that he could distinctly hear the emphasis which I employed, and supposed that it could not altogether escape the hearing of the audience. Yet, such was not the case. It is an art of speech which I possess, and of which, Mr. Vernon, you shall have a sample some day.

“‘Look you, Richard,’ said I, ‘it was only to-day I asked you for a matter of seventy dollars to pay off a d—d tailor that was troubling me. You refused me; was that done like Richard?’

“‘Strike on, you d—d fool,’ said he, ‘or I’ll strike you off. What are you talking about? Strike!’

“‘Never till you consent to let me have the money. You sha’n’t die by my hands to-night, Richard. I’ll leave you half-dead upon the stage, and for once there shall be no catastrophe. Will you let me have the money?’

“‘Yes, yes, anything,’ was his answer; ‘but strike on, the pit is getting impatient. Strike! strike!’

“We tugged away quite heartily then for a few seconds, the house roared with applause, and some of the groundlings, after he had received the *coup de grace*, actually *encored* the performance, clearly signifying a desire that he should do the death over again. But, would you think it, the ungrateful tyrant refused to let me have the money the next morning, and added to the enormity of his conduct by giving me my walking ticket. Was it not shocking, Mr. Vernon? Did I not merit the money for the humor of the thing? But he had no soul to feel it—none, none!”

Before Vernon or the father could answer the question, or comment upon the transaction, another person entered the apartment and interrupted the dialogue. The introduction of the new-comer must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WHY AND THE WHEREFORE.

"It tastes
Of rank injustice, and some other end
Time will discover; and yet our grace is bound
To hear his accusation confirmed,
Or hunt this spotted panther to his ruin."—SHIRLEY

THE stranger was one of whom the reader has already heard. The quick eye of Vernon distinguished his friend at a glance, nor was that of the other less observant. The warmth of their embrace, when they met, spoke for a deep mutual regard between the two, not only superior to that which belongs to ordinary friendships, but something more than could be expected to appear in the case of persons so unequal in years. Mr. Carter could not have been less than forty-five; a tall, well-made man, with a fine, full, but dark countenance; an eye, black and lively, but of benevolent expression; and a look of amenity and kindness which denoted a degree of soberness and subdued thought, in which the buoyant spirits of the youth of twenty-five, could scarcely find much that was congenial. Vernon could not have been much more than twenty-five; his temperament was evidently lively, if not rash; and good humor and a playful spirit, seemed to predominate in his disposition.

The gravity, the almost sadness, of Carter's countenance, was unreflected in his own; and yet, it may be added, the sympathy was quite as close between them, as could be hoped for under any circumstances; and whatever might be the difference of their moods and wishes, under the influence of unequal ages, there was none of that exacting severity, on the part of Carter, or of that distaste to discipline, on the side of Vernon, which might endanger the relation. If Carter was grave, even to mel-

ancholy, he was, at the same time, benign and indulgent. He could make allowance for the impatience of youth, esteeming it, perhaps, a fault that was not without its virtues, in a country which calls more imperatively for boldness and adventure, than any other more sober qualities. If he smiled at the follies of youth, it was the smile of indulgence, or, at most, of pity and not the ascetic grin of scorn and malevolence.

Vernon, on the other hand, warm, impetuous, and lively, never once forgot the superior years of his patron—for such was Carter—nor suffered his veneration to undergo diminution because the latter sometimes encouraged him by the familiar freedoms of the companion. The utmost confidence prevailed between them, the result, possibly, of a mutual and perfect knowledge of their respective claims and character. The observation of Carter had taught him that his protégé was a man of the strictest honor, the nicest sensibility, the most fearless courage and the finest talent. Vernon was no less assured of the high virtues of one who had been to him a protecting and wisely indulgent parent, in the place of all others, from his very first moment of reflecting consciousness, to that in which they meet the reader.

The entrance of Carter was the signal for the flight of the *soi-disant* actor. His genius quailed before the eye of the newcomer, in whom he recognised a well-known monitor, who did not spare his rebuke, and whose influence upon the father, had tended in no small degree to restrain his eccentricities, by diminishing the money, which the old man was but too ready to yield to his requisitions. Still, the deportment of Carter was kind and gentle to him, as to all the rest, and as it was, habitually, to everybody. His salutation differed not from his wont, when he shook the hand of the young man and bade him welcome home, after so long an absence. But this forbearance in no wise encouraged the erring Master Tom. From a dashing, *nonchalant* personage, he became suddenly subdued to the awkward country lout, only anxious to know how best to effect his escape without challenging attention to his movements. This he was soon enabled to do, when he found the regards of Carter chiefly bestowed upon the youth, and his shoulder turned upon himself. He stole away, and was followed after a little while,

by old Horsey, whom a sturdy negro assisted to his chamber. It was there that the father again found Young Hopeful, and renewed the various dialogue, a sufficient sample of which the reader has already had. We will not distress him by a repetition of the dramatic slang, with which Tom replied to, and annoyed the old man; whose chief objections to the quotations, lay, perhaps, in the difficulty which he found to comprehend them.

Our present purpose carries us back to the apartment which we left. There, the two, apparently resuming a subject already partially considered, were earnestly engaged in the adjustment of topics, the business of which will form no small portion of the ensuing narration. It may serve us, therefore, who design to trace its progress to the end, to give some heed to a conference which will, perhaps, the better enable us to understand some of its objects, and of the histories of those who are most conspicuous in its details.

"You are resolved then, my son; you know all the adventure—its troubles, its dangers and the numberless difficulties that surround it. These, you see, at least, if nothing beside; and with a perfect knowledge of these, and with the farther prospect of incurring these risks and difficulties without effecting your purpose, you freely and voluntarily determine upon the journey?"

"Freely, willingly, my dear sir, and with a satisfaction, not easily expressed, that I find you willing to confide to me a charge of such importance," was the unhesitating reply of the youth.

The other squeezed his hand in silence for a few moments ere he resumed.

"Perhaps, Harry, since such is your resolution, it is due to you that I should unfold myself a little more. Your confidence in me deserves it, and were it not so, the confidence which I have in you leaves me without fear that I incur a risk in giving you my nearest secrets. From this I can suffer no harm, now, not even in feeling, by its revelation. But a few months, nay a few weeks ago, it had been otherwise. I am now free to relieve myself from the accumulating pressure of a grief—a grief of youth, that I have learned to silence, if not subdue—but

which at length breaks from all restraints when I am no longer young. You have seen this man?"

"I have, sir."

"Ay, but not to know him. He is my senior by five years, but he was my associate—my friend—when we were both young. Boyish friendships are of little value at any time, and in most cases they are of evil consequence. The name is perverted, the tie is not an enduring one, and, even if other harm does not come of it, the effect is evil in teaching us lessons of distrust, when genuine worth implores our confidence, and true friendship might be had by kindred worth. But I will deal in facts and not in maxims.

"William Maitland was my habitual associate from boyhood. We came to Mississippi together, and for several years I had no reason to regret my confidence in him. We lived together harmoniously, sought the same sports together, made the same journeys in company, and took pleasure in the same society. My labors grew prosperous, however, and his did not. This made him discontented. He left me and went down to Orleans, where he invested his capital in trade. Two years elapsed before I again saw him. I had in the meantime become acquainted with the family of Colonel Ralph Taylor, of Pearl River. He was a worthy old gentleman, but the chief attraction of his household in my eye, was his youngest daughter Ellen. I loved her, Harry, with all the ardor of a heart as purely unselfish in its pursuit as belongs to mortal; but I told her not my love. I feared to do it, as I saw nothing in her deportment which, to my watchful eyes, held forth any encouragement to my hopes. Perhaps, it was, that, with all the doubts and timidity of a true affection, estimating its own claims at the humblest rate, as sincere affection is most always apt to do, I shrunk from pressing upon her those regards which I felt, and occasioned a kindred doubt in her mind of my real purposes. I had reason to think afterward that I deceived myself—that she really loved me—that—but this is needless. Enough, that at this moment I received a visit from Maitland. He came to borrow money, and finding me not at home, and his wants being pressing, he followed me to the residence of Colonel Taylor. There he saw Ellen; and, to shorten a story already quite too

long, there he won her. But not at this first visit. He came back with me to my residence, which was then at Woodville, and procured the money which he required. But while with me, he artfully procured from me all necessary information with regard to the Taylor family—its character, connections and resources. I did not reveal to him my feeling for Ellen, but he must have seen it. A short time after this, while on a visit to Natchez, I was seized with the yellow fever, which nearly brought me to the grave. For days I remained without consciousness of what was going on around me; for weeks without strength to leave my chamber. In this time Maitland prosecuted opportunities which I had seemed to neglect. He pressed his pretensions upon Ellen, and in a moment of wilfulness of heart, such as seizes upon the best of us at times, she accepted him. I had reason to know afterward that she had not been insensible to my attentions, and that she was taught to believe that I had trifled with her. William Maitland knew of my illness all the while, but studiously withheld the utterance of what he knew. The first knowledge I had of my loss was the notice of their marriage in one of the Orleans papers, to which city he removed her a short time after the event. Since then I have but once seen her, and then—”

Carter paused in his narrative as if struggling with the climax of those emotions with which he had evidently striven earnestly for some time before. He rose from his chair and paced the room a while, the eyes of Vernon in the meantime being fixed upon the fireplace.

“I had thought myself too old and too strong for these weaknesses, Harry, but the affections which grow up in solitude seldom become obtuse. Were I a citizen, now, I could deliver you this narrative with a smile; but, as I am, I almost regret that I have begun it.”

“Do not, then, pursue it, sir, I beg you—at least not on my account,” said Vernon.

“Nay, nay, Harry, it is begun, and the beginning is half the battle always. I must now finish it, or never. I trust, having opened my bosom to you, to be better able to preserve silence on this subject for ever after. The affair staggered me in regard to Maitland’s sincerity and faith. I was puzzled to deter

mine upon his conduct; and my chief suspicions arose, not so much from his having married, as from the studious secrecy which he had observed toward me on the subject. I got no letter from him; I heard of no inquiry or invitation—nothing, indeed, of him or of his business, until he had removed her to Orleans. He had need of me again. He became the candidate for an office of great trust, and applied to me to be his surety. It was then that I saw Ellen Taylor for the first, and, I may almost say, the last time, as the wife of another. She is in her grave now; but it will not disparage her memory, with you, my son, when I tell you, that it was from her but half-conscious lips, that I was taught to believe that I might have been the happy possessor of her hand, as, to the last, I was the real possessor of her heart. Do not attach blame to the pure spirit of her from whom this confession came. It was while her mind wandered in the delirium from which she never recovered, that her sweet lips told me this blessed truth. I kissed them, Harry, in a fond requital, when the angel had left the tenement in which it had been so troubled! I kissed them, Harry, when, colder than the marble which was so soon to cover her, I well knew that there was no danger that *his* lips would remove the sad and sacred seal which mine had set upon them!"

The struggling tear of Harry Vernon soon followed that of his patron. His silence was the best show of sympathy that his good sense suffered him to make. The other after a brief pause proceeded.

"The surety which I then gave for Maitland is the cause of our trouble now, as you may readily suppose. But for *her*, Harry, I had not given him my name, for I had sufficient reason then to distrust him; and, but for *her*—but that I still loved, fondly enough for any sacrifice—I had not been guilty of the greater folly of persuading our friend Gamage to a similar risk. The defalcation of Maitland will nearly ruin Gamage as well as myself. But this I can not suffer. As it was because of my entreaties that he consented to sign Maitland's bond with me, I must save him harmless as far as I can. To this point then, your commission extends. Let Maitland give up the money which he is known to have taken from the bank, and we will pledge ourselves not to prosecute, and I will secure

to his children—he has but two—the amount of twenty-five thousand dollars, in any form of investment which he may prescribe, so that it be under any disposal but his own. Nor shall he be left otherwise unconsidered in the matter. I will give him my bond, stipulating the annual payment while he lives of three hundred and fifty dollars, being a sum quite sufficient for his wants in that privacy to which he must, for his own and the sake of his children, for ever after confine himself. He will see from this, if he be not besotted and ripe for destruction, that I have no disposition to pursue him with malice. But my forbearance is no tribute to my regard for him, any more than to his worth. But he is the father of *her* children, and I would wish to save them from that shame and sorrow which justice might, without compunction, freely visit upon him. You now understand, precisely, the relation between us, and will thus be better able to exercise that discretionary power in any arrangement you may think advisable to make, which you could not so well have done without this knowledge. I am guilty of no ill-advised or idle flattery, my dear Harry, when I declare my perfect willingness to rely upon your judgment and to abide by any course which you may resolve upon. I have found you always worthy; I doubt not that your ability will keep pace with your worth. But you have no easy task, and your hope of success will depend very much upon your being unknown to Maitland.

“But for the risk of spoiling all, you should not go alone upon this mission, nor, perhaps, should you have gone at all. My appearance would alarm his fears and prompt his flight, and indeed, the appearance of any stranger will have a tendency to awaken his fears and compel his caution. He, no doubt, wherever he may be, will have his creatures on the watch, and be himself watchful. Your genius must contrive its own modes for disarming his fears, and appearing in his neighborhood as an ordinary character. I can give you but little counsel that is not general. One rule is a good one always among strangers in our country, and that is to ‘be secret, yet have no secrets.’ Utter yourself without reserve, yet say nothing which had better be reserved. Have no mysteries to your neighbor, though every thought be hidden. This is

enough; your own reflection must do the rest. I have wearied out your patience, Harry, but I have now finished."

"You spoke, sir, of his connection with gamblers: is this certain?"

"Yes; he is known to have lost a part of the property which came by his wife at faro in Orleans. He is also known to have frequented places of habitual resort by the blacklegs of that city. What connection he may have with them now, is simply conjectural, but there is great reason to fear that his separation from them will never be complete while he lives. He had a passion for play which has probably grown upon him, and which will no doubt lose him his ill-gotten spoils, unless he is very closely and suddenly pressed for them."

"May he not have lost these moneys already, sir—may not his defalcation and flight have resulted from his losses?"

"I hope not, and think not, for we happen to know that the particular parcels of gold and paper which he took, were in the bank up to within three hours of his flight."

"That may be, sir, yet he may have appropriated the sums taken to the payment of previous losses."

"This is probable in part. I make no doubt that he was compelled to appropriate in this manner, but it seems scarcely probable that he would have foreborne supplying himself with the means of future indulgence or support. That he did not appear at the tables after the robbery, we know from those whom the bank set as spies upon them. Suppose, however, that ten thousand dollars be already gone, which will be a liberal allowance, we can afford that—we must, indeed, and something more—but let us struggle for the rest. I make no secret to you, Harry, of the fact that my own responsibilities to the bank, and the resolve which I have taken that Gamage shall go harmless, will leave me destitute—utterly destitute—unless we recover something of this loss."

"My efforts shall not be wanting," was the simple assurance of the youth; "you have provided the necessary papers, sir?"

"I will do so, and expect the other documents from Orleans, by Friday next. You will be compelled to defer your departure until then. Meanwhile, it may be well if you attend upon the court. It will help to conceal your present object—which it

is important that you should conceal here as elsewhere—if you should appear like the rest of your profession seeking its usual opportunities. I doubt whether you'll get business, but that lack is too general among beginners to occasion wonder; and it will be quite enough to show that you want, and would not refuse it, if it were to offer. But let us take a breathing spell—you have ridden far to-day, and so have I. A good night's sleep will freshen our minds, and probably help us to new ideas. You saw the youth—the son of Mr. Horsey—had he been long before me?"

"An hour, perhaps—not more."

"A thoughtless, improvident lad, with some capacity but little ballast. With his own turn of mind, and his father's indulgence, he will come to nothing. Caught young, and in other hands, he would have done well. It is too late now. I need not counsel you to say nothing that he should not hear; but, keep your papers close; make no memorandums that he may read. He is honest, I believe, but has a prying, curious disposition, as much the result of an idle, restless mood, as of anything else. Let him not feed it at our expense, when a little timely prudence may save us any risk. And now to bed, Harry, as Master Tom would phrase it, with what appetite we may."

CHAPTER V.

ALL THE WORLD A STAGE—VARIETY OF PLAYERS.

Clack.—But are there players among the apprehended?

Scentwell.—Yes, sir, and they were contriving to act a play among themselves just as we surprised them, and spoiled their sport.

Clack.—Players! I'll pay them above all the rest.

RICHARD BROOME, 1632.—*The Merry Beggars.*

WHEN Harry Vernon entered the hall the next morning, the first person he met was Master Thomas Horsey, who encountered him, *selon les règles*, in the most approved fashion of the theatrical world, with a fitting quotation, to provide himself with which, he had, no doubt, groped half the night through his pocket Shakspeare.

“‘My cousin Vernon! welcome, by my soul!’ I’ve been waiting for you, sir, with the impatience of a thirsty throat, to which anything like delay in the antifogmatic, is almost certain bronchitis. Here, sir, is garden mint—fresh, sir—I pulled it myself; or, if you prefer the animal julep, here is an egg—I did not lay it myself, but will warrant it quite as fresh as the mint. The whiskey is at your elbow, the peach at mine, and the sooner we fall to, the better. ‘A good sherris sack hath a two-fold operation in it.’ Which take you?—What! neither?”

Horsey put down his own glass in wonder. The idea of refusing a morning dram had never entered his brain.

“You are not serious, Mr. Vernon?—you will surely take one or t’other—the peach brandy?”

“Neither, Mr. Horsey. You must excuse me; it is not a habit with me to drink in the morning.”

“It is not, eh? Well, I’m sorry—sorry for your sake not less than my own. The habit were not a bad one, Mr. Vernon, nevertheless; and I commend you to better examples

in this particular than it has been your fortune to fall upon. I drink, sir, to our better acquaintance. I should have relished much to have had some conversation with you last night, but that 'learned Theban,' Master Benjamin Carter, making his appearance, sent me off in a jiffy, and dammed up my ideas quite as effectually as if he had run the great raft of the Mississippi-bend into my brain. He's a sober old boy, that, Harry Monmouth—likes not my merriment—'he loves no plays,' and still less players, 'and smiles in such a sort.' I tell you what, Master Vernon, though no man can think of Ben Carter more worthily than I do, yet, by the faith that is within me, I fear him something—that is 'I rather tell thee what is to be feared than what I fear.' He hath ever been a sort of curb upon me; he sees through my follies, when dad is about to reward them as virtues; and the tricks which would triumph over everybody else, he seems to unravel as easily, and trace home to the true author as certainly, as if he had a gift of divining. He's a relation of yours, Master Vernon?"

"No, sir—none—an acquaintance of my father, and friend of the family."

"You're from below?—left the old people?—'Egad I had almost asked if you had not left them with light heels and lighter heart. I've been so much used to doing that sort of business myself, that the suspicion was natural enough, though, seeing you with Ben Carter, such a conjecture would have been very foolish. You're a lawyer? Come to plead at Raymond? Got any business to go upon yet?" &c.

Young Horsey resembled his father in one respect: he had all his curiosity. We have thrown into the compass of one paragraph the hundred questions which he contrived to ask before the rest of the family made their appearance. In the sight of Carter his ardor was something restrained, though, in the mild benignant countenance of the latter, one would seek in vain for that sign of power to which the young actor ascribed so much potency. He finished his breakfast before the rest, and, as he left the room, catching the eye of Vernon, he put on the aspect and manner of an awkward clown, terrified at finding himself in so solemn presence, and striving to leave it with as little noise as necessary, by moving on tip-toe and backward to

the entrance. Once there, he bounded from the steps, and by a single agile movement was in the middle of the road. The next moment he might be heard, spouting a favorite passage at the very top of his voice

"If Tom would only leave off that d—d player-book," began the father apologetically to Carter.

"It is a folly that will do no harm, my good friend, unless you stimulate it by hard usage. The book is innocent enough—it is not that, but the love of praise, which turns your son's head. Listen to his speeches patiently, and he will think you the best audience he ever had; and if you can sometimes contrive to clap your hands together in this manner when he has concluded his speech—"

"As they do at the theatre-houses?" demanded the father with some eagerness.

"Ay—even so."

"Well, Carter, what then—what'll be the good of it?"

"I think it not unlikely he will be content to stay at home with you and mind his business."

"But he promises to do so now, Ben Carter. He says he's done with Orleans and the play-houses. He has good reason for it, I can tell you. He's grazed upon the sheriff at Orleans, and had a queer bout with the head man of the theatre. He told us all about it last night—I didn't quite see into the fun of the thing, but Tom says it was deused funny, and Mr. Vernon was mightily tickled at the story. I think there is a change in Tom, and as he promises so fair—"

"Don't rely too much upon his promises. He can not so soon break away from his old habits, and must be allowed some little farther swing before he dismisses his levities sufficiently to suffer him to come home and go to work. Only do not by unnecessary harshness drive him into them. Notice his follies as little as may be, and tolerate his speeches even where you do not exactly understand them. (The scorn of a father not unfrequently drives a son to defiance) when some little indulgence to his idle tastes, might leave him free to see into their absurdities himself. Let me warn you, however, to give him as little money as possible. He wants but little in the country, and where he asks for much, it is a sure sign of profligacy.

Do not expect to see him sober on a sudden. I would rather he should not become so. I should suspect him of a worse offence still, than any you have against him—hypocrisy. The best sign in his favor, since his return, is that he still continues his spouting, knowing your hostility to the practice—though it may prove him wanting in proper reverence, it saves him at least from the suspicion of disingenuousness. Give him employment as soon as you can, and let time do the rest. A sudden change is seldom to be relied on; and a transition from one extreme to another, is almost always the practice of a rogue.”

“But Tom is honest—Tom’s no rogue, Ben Carter.”

“I believe it, Horsey. Do you take care that you do not make him one. It is not uncommon for you to denounce him as a rogue—to call him rascal, and scoundrel, and such abusive names as these. To give him the rogue’s reputation, is to take from him one of the great inducements to be an honest man. Beware that you do not this.”

Meanwhile, the subject of this discussion was pursuing his walk, with all the heedlessness of a wayward mind, through all the nooks and crannies of the village. He was busy seeking out old haunts and old associates. Tom Horsey was popular with everybody in Raymond but his father. His pompous declamations, his noisy humor, the readiness with which he joined in a joke, and the steadfastness with which he pursued it, commended him naturally to all the younger portions of the community; and now that he reappeared among them, there were salutations on every hand. Smiles and pleasant speeches, that inflated the vain heart of the youth to the utmost, encountered him at every corner, and he swaggered along the main street with the air of one conscious that his movements were witnessed by an audience far more indulgent than ever Richmond found at Orleans, even when he bestrid the tyrant, and commanded his own terms from the prostrate and ungenerous manager.

There was a miserable little rookery that stood at the western entrance of the village, where a still more miserable sort of business was carried on by a man named Hawkins. This man was an idle worthless creature, and his obvious pursuits

were supposed by many persons to be only a sort of cover for other objects which were, possibly, far more profitable, though not so legitimate. In his shop might be seen a barrel of whiskey, a kitt of tobacco, a few knives, pipes, candles, and 'coon-skins; seldom anything more; but there were shed-rooms to his dwelling, and upper chambers, which were asserted to be very well fitted up, in which no limited profits were made out of the ignorant and the unwary. Public Justice had her eye upon this establishment, but, up to the present time, nothing had transpired of sufficient importance to justify her in setting her hands upon the lintel. The proprietor kept a closer watch upon her movements, than her emissaries maintained over his; and whatever might have been the suspicions of the neighbors, Hawkins met them with a bold front, and challenged their inquiries.

To this house the actor drew nigh. His approach was watched by the proprietor and another man, who stood with him at the entrance.

"Here is the very chap himself," said Hawkins. "This is the younger Horsey—the crazy actor—who run away to Orleans, and paid the manager, it is said, for permission to appear and spend his father's picayunes as fast as they are made. Yet the old fool dotes upon him, and will leave himself bare to give the youngster his buff breeches. By a little management we may get out of him all that we want to know, or, at least, all that he is able to tell. He is vain of his abilities as an actor, and by feeding his swallow, we may easily pick his teeth."

"Is it he that struts so?" demanded the other.

"The same. This stranger, Vernon, lodges with his father. It is known that he inquired for Carter on his first arrival, and received directions to the house of Horsey."

"And what can this silly fellow know? If he be the man you speak him, would they be fools enough to trust him with any of their secrets?"

"Scarcely—I do not hope for that. But Tom Horsey is one of those restless, fidgetty sort of persons, who are continually meddling with the affairs of other people. He will glean from his father all that he knows of Carter and Vernon, and if they are not exceedingly sly, he will see into their concerns as far as themselves."

"It can do no harm to sound him. He draws nigh."

"Hawkins advanced from the doorway, and addressed the actor in a fashion of his own.

"'Horatio, or I do mistake myself.'"

"'The same,' Mr. Hawkins, 'and your good servant ever.' How does the world use you—still in the old stand, I see."

"Ay, Tom, and at a stand. But where have you been this year of Sundays. I haven't seen you 'since the gander's neck was last soaped.'"

"'No more of that, Hal, an thou lovest me,'" was the reply, followed by a hearty laugh from both, as the phrase, which may seem somewhat mysterious to any but southern readers, reminded them of one of those practical jokes, in which it was Tom Horsey's misfortune too frequently to indulge. "No more of that, Hawkins, I pray you—let that story be forgotten."

"Forgotten, indeed?—impossible; the story's quite too good and I must tell it to my friend here. Saxon, Mr. Thomas Horsey; Tom, my friend Ellis Saxon, a gentleman from the Yazoo—a glorious fellow like yourself, loves a joke from the bottom of his heart, and will die some day in a frolic—"

"In a ditch!" cried Horsey, concluding the sentence. "Pardon me, Mr. Saxon, the prediction is just as like and more like to fall upon me than upon you; and it's an old rhyme of a song that the western boys sing when they're boating down to Orleans:" and he repeated the lines that follow:—

"Though we be not wise or rich,
Yet what matter—touch the snag—
We can frolic in a ditch,
Fierce at poker, brave at brag."

"A good song—I've heard it a hundred times, though not lately. The boatmen are done up now. These steam-sturgeons have cut up as pretty a branch of business as ever needed a long pole, and deserved a glorious frolic. But what of that, Tom Horsey? Is there to be no pleasure in the world because we can get to Orleans now in ten days in place of forty? If the steam-sturgeon does up the 'broad horn,' there's a long horn that raises the steam. Come in, my son, and take a sup of whiskey while I tell Saxon about the goose's neck."

"No, no, Hawkins, let that dog sleep. I'll come in and join you with the whiskey, but no scratching old sores, say I."

"What, you're not afraid of consequences now—don't you know the old Squire's done up—gone to his long nap. He'll never trouble you about it, sonny."

"No matter, I've sworn off from these 'ricks, Bill Hawkins!—I've promised the old man to put on a straight coat, crop my hair and go to meeting o' Sundays—"

"And be at all the love-feasts!—what of all that, Tom?—do you think to keep your neighbor from being happy because you have grown sour. 'Because thou art virtuous, shall there be no more cakes and ale?' Come in, thou reluctant saint, who would put on two faces of tragedy and comedy at the same time—come in, and Saxon will tell you of the splendid blowout on the Georgiana steamboat, going up the river last month. They had a play on board, Tom Horsey—an amateur play—and played Julius Cæsar to more than four hundred persons, the part of Brutus by our old friend, Hugh Peters, the limping schoolmaster at Clinton."

"Hugh Peters play Brutus—the impudent pedagogue! You don't say so, Mr. Saxon; do tell me all the particulars. Hugh Peters, indeed! What could have put it into the leatherhead, to think that he could play Brutus?"

"What but hearing us spout the dialogue at school—'That you have wronged me,' &c. But, come in; the water's on the fire, and the whiskey on the stand."

The news of the amateur performance was quite enough for the mercurial Horsey. His good resolutions were forgotten in an instant, and in two minutes more he was sitting between Hawkins and Saxon, in a little cupboard-like apartment, back of the house, a kettle upon the fire, glasses upon the table, and everything in preparation for one of those regular rounds to which the young actor was already but too much accustomed.

"These steamboats have their advantages after all; and so, Mr. Saxon, the chaps on board the Georgiana got up a tolerable piece of work, did they?"

"Ay, on the upper deck, Mr. Horsey; and considering the short preparation they had, the thing was really well done. There was one chap, an actor from Orleans, named Tilton—"

"Tilton, I know him—a mere candle-snuffer—what the d—l did he pretend to do?" demanded Horsey, interrupting the speaker.

"He played Cæsar—played the ghost rather, and did it so well, that he scared the women half to death. His face was so pale—I can't conceive how he could have brought himself to so death-like a complexion."

"Psha, sir, the easiest thing in the world—a little chalk or magnesia does it—and as for the whiskers, the mustache, the imperial, and such small matters, they lie, sir, at the end of a burned cork, and may be had at a moment's warning."

"Ah, indeed!" was the response of Mr. Saxon, made with the utmost seeming simplicity.

The conceited Thespian continued:—

"These are the arts, sir, of the actor; and, though not absolutely essential to the artist, yet you can not conceive how much they help the imagination of the spectator; in the arousing of which lies, probably, the great secret of the good dramatist and perfect actor; but what you tell me of 'Little Bowlegs'—so we used to call Hugh Peters—'ye gods, it doth amaze me!' to think that he should presume to play at all, and then to play Brutus—'twas a test part—a fellow that talks through his nose, and swings his arms about like a windmill—that walks, for all the world, like a strutting gobbler, and has a face like a squash. Ha! ha! it must have been very ridiculous, Mr. Saxon."

"Not at all," was the reply. "We were all too dull, and wanting something to enliven us, the thing did well enough; and there were some present, who thought Cæsar was done quite as well as Caldwell himself could have done it."

"Caldwell be d—d!" was the irreverent response of Horsey to this opinion.

"Pardon me, Mr. Saxon; I mean no offence, but it agitates my bile, when I hear Caldwell spoken of in tragedy. I should think better of Herr Cline, the rope-dancer. 'I'm a soused gurnet,' sir, if Caldwell is anything but a comedian—a devilish clever comedian, who spoils himself by attempting anything else; and as for these folks in the steamboat, being pleased with such performers as Tilton and 'Little Bowlegs,' they must

have been most cursedly tired of the boat, or must have had the smallest possible particle of good taste and good sense among them. 'Brutus, Hugh Peter,' 'Julius Cæsar, Jim Tilton'—candle-snuffers in extraordinary for the American theatre—it's very ridiculous. Hawkins, trouble you for that spoon, and the sugar."

A quiet smile of contempt played over the cold, dark features of Saxon, as he saw the importance which the youth attached to the matter, and beheld the swelling indignation with which he spoke of the despised amateurs. As if disposed to humor the folly and conceit of the youth, he continued the topic.

"But are you not exceedingly aristocratic in your notions, Mr. Horsey?—Because a man has been forced to snuff candles, does it follow that he is incapable of something better?"

"Surely not, sir, surely not. The fates forbid that I should deal in such a pernicious doctrine. What was Shakspeare himself, my masters; his early career is enough, without other authority, to prevent me from such sheer folly of opinion; but Tilton is no Shakspeare, nor no Garrick; and, however he may have played the ghost of Cæsar, I tell you, he will be nothing but a miserable candle-snuffer all his life. Look you, I reason thus, Mr. Saxon. I have seen our friend, Hawkins, jump for a wager, and know his best pitch to a feather's width. Shall I not be able to say, 'Thus far can Bill Hawkins jump, and no farther?' Even thus do I tell you that Tilton was born to be a candle-snuffer, and nothing better—unless it be a call-boy on the stage."

"Yet was it said," remarked Saxon quietly, "that he was going to open the theatres at Vicksburg and Natchez."

"'Gods, grant us patience!' but it is scarce possible!"

"I heard as much myself," was the confirmatory statement of Hawkins.

"The d—d fool!—he's mad—utterly mad. On the word of a gentleman, Mr. Saxon, this fellow has no sort of rank—no reputation—no ability. Were I a manager, he should have no employment at my hands. The fellow is perfectly incapable."

"He is going to have a roaring company, nevertheless," said Hawkins. "He's engaged Peters for third-rate characters, and is getting up recruits from every quarter."

“‘I shall forget myself!’ Was there ever such an insolent pretender?”

The amateur was almost furious. The moment had arrived when he could be best practised upon; and the game was continued.

“They say he has taken up actors even here in Raymond. Was not this young fellow Vernon, one of his men?” was the inquiry of Saxon, urged with a manner of the most perfect indifference.

“Yes, I think that was the name. He came into town last night,” replied Hawkins.

“Who?—what? Harry—Harry Vernon! Psha, Hawkins, I know all about that. He’s none of them—he’s no actor—nothing but a lawyer riding the circuit. He’s a sort of relation of sour Ben—so we call Ben Carter—and I s’pose the old boy’s got him some cases. He stayed with us last night, and I took a julep with him this morning. Told me all about it himself.”

“Indeed! He’s a relation of Carter, and no actor, then?” demanded Saxon.

“No! he’s no actor—has no notion of it. As for his being a relation of sour Ben, I don’t know whether I’m right to say that—indeed, for that matter, I think he told me he was not—only an acquaintance. No, he’s no actor, I assure you; and if all your information about Tilton and Bowlegs be no better founded than this, I wouldn’t give much for the new theatre.”

“You may be deceived even in this, Mr. Horsey,” said Saxon. “This young man Vernon, they say, is going up into the Yazoo. Did he tell you that?”

“Lord, no! There’s no truth in it, I’m certain, and sour Ben is too strict a chap to be very close with an actor. If he only once dreamed that Harry Vernon had such a notion, he’d throw up his hand in a minute. I know sour Ben too well: he’d cut loose from the young ’un, and leave him just rope enough to hang himself.”

“What you say rather strengthens the report. If Vernon knows this of Carter, as without doubt he does, would not this be reason enough why he should keep his secret while under the old man’s eye, particularly, if he has any favor to look for

at Carter's hands—as it is said he has? Now, they do say, and I may as well tell you, I heard it from Tilton himself, on board the Georgiana, that Vernon was engaged secretly to play first characters.”

“The devil! you say—first characters!” was the exclamation of the astounded amateur. “Who could have believed it—the fellow was so sly. But I needn't wonder at that. Egad, I played a shy game at first with Ben Carter myself. But, Harry Monmouth—well, to confess a truth, the chap played the sly one cleverly, if what you tell me be indeed the truth. But I am not certain yet.”

“Look into it,” said Hawkins carelessly; “and so sure am I that Saxon has good authority for what he says, I'll go a quart, and a dozen cabanas upon it.”

“Soh! it's a bet,” replied the amateur. “Our hands upon it, Trojan, and it will be a close tongue that can keep my worm from getting under it. I'll through Harry Monmouth's knapsack before he takes his crumbs out, or may I never look down upon the footlights again. Mr. Saxon”—drinking—“the stage, sir, though it be carried in a steamboat.”

“Very good—devilish good, Tom,” cried Hawkins, apparently delighted with the modest play upon words which the actor had attempted. “You were always clever at these things, but your frolic seems to have freshened and improved you. But what did the old man say, Tom, when you came back? The story was that you had made his factor hand over to the tune of three or four thousand dollars, which you lost at faro in one night.”

“Not so bad as that, Hawkins, though bad enough still. I have worried the old man something too much, but I have promised him reformation, and—”

“Will keep your promise—if you can.”

“Well said, Hawkins,” responded the youth with a sigh; if I can. The task is a very difficult one; for this d—d stuff you've been telling me of Tilton and his floating theatre, has put me in a most inconceivable state of combustion. I should think well of the plan, if that wool-headed candle-snuffer had nothing to do with it. In good hands a theatre at Natchez—’

“Under the hill,” said Hawkins with a sneer.

"No, no! there's too much hell-broth there; the gruel is slab, but not good enough in that quarter, unless in playing Tom and Jerry, to which I do not much incline; but for a respectable establishment, I doubt not that we should be able to keep it up, and put money in our pockets, at least four months in the year. We could then shift our quarters, as the old players did, from one barn to another. We could go to Vicksburg, Grand Gulf, Manchester, Port Gibson, and all about, and drive the prettiest and merriest gipsy business one could desire. 'By the Lord, our plot is a good plot as ever was laid!' but it would spoil the best plot, ay, and the best play too, to have such a botch as Tilton in the management."

"Tilton, or no Tilton, Tom, remember the bet. We must satisfy it before this youth, Vernon, leaves Raymond."

"My hand on't. But are you for court now—what's to be done—any murder cases. I like to listen to them; they are so many eggs for tragedy, which unborn Shaksperes may hatch. What say you, men—go along with me."

"Time enough; the court won't open for an hour, and there are only a few cases of assault and battery; nothing of interest. Stay awhile and sup your whiskey, and we'll go with you then. Saxon, your glass waits."

Let us leave the trio for awhile.

CHAPTER VI.

HUMORS OF A CLIENT—NEW MODE OF ARGUING A CASE OF
ASSAULT AND BATTERY.

"See, where he lies, slaughter'd without the camp,
And by a simple swain, a mercenary,
Who bravely took the combat to himself."—ROB. GREENE, 1560.

VERNON, meanwhile, accompanied by his friend and patron, proceeded to the court-house, in the area in front of which he encountered the curious gaze of all the natives to whom the face of a stranger is instantly obvious, and in the examination of whom they do not always content themselves with the keen scrutiny of the eye. "Whar' are you from, stranger?" and "whar' are you guine!" and "what's your business here?" and "what do you do there?" are the ordinary questions by which the forest-born contrive to obtain possession of that intelligence for which the Atlantic citizen has his morning gazette.

The crowd was fast assembling, and Vernon left alone by Mr. Carter, who was required to attend to some pressing business elsewhere, was, of course, compelled to go through his examination like all the rest, and bore it with the most becoming fortitude and good nature. Not that he answered his inquisitors with a strict regard to the truth; this might have exposed him to defeat in the purposes which he had in view; but with that ready adroitness which is the sign of keen and quick imagination, and which, by the way, is one of the very first requisites in a country circuit lawyer, he answered them in such a way as to reveal nothing, and yet satisfy them that he had nothing more to reveal. When asked about New Orleans, he could tell them a long story about the new big steamboat of which they had heard wonders; and by conversing freely with Tom, Dick, and Harry, about matters with

which neither himself nor Tom, Dick, or Harry, had anything to do, convinced all around that he was no starched, stiff-necked upstart, so solicitous of his own birth, family, and fortune, as to dread the effect of their contact upon his nobility.

"A 'cute chap," said one, "that fellow, Vernon; knows all about that Orleans railroad and the big steamboat; says Madame Lalaurie, she that licked her poor niggers to death, and tied 'em week after week without hog or hominy, will get mightily smashed among the Orleans lawyers."

"He's an Orleans lawyer, then?" demanded another.

"I rether reckon so," was the reply, "though, by the powers, he didn't tell me that."

"Well, but now he's moved into Massissippi, or how could he come to plead here in Raymond."

"That's true—I'll go and ax him where he lives now; I rather like the chap," was the opinion and resolve of the baffled inquisitor, whom Vernon had contrived to lead from himself by freely enlarging upon other matters, which, for the moment, amply satisfied the hearer's curiosity.

But the youth had disappeared from the spot, and was then in the rear of the courthouse where he had been called by Carter who held him in close conference. Meanwhile, the court was convened, his honor had taken his seat, and the crowd, hurrying with that strange curiosity which is never so well satisfied as when it hears of the misdeeds of its own nature, and which is never so active and apprehensive as in a secluded country village, soon forgot all concern for the interesting stranger, and gave itself up, soul and body, to the clamors of officers, silencing clamor; the calls of jurymen and witnesses; the small wit of small lawyers, and the sapient wisdom of the judge, whose oracles, generally monosyllabic, are accompanied by a shake of the head, worse-wise than Burleigh's.

Carter, having concluded the relation of a matter which belonged to the expedition of his protégé was about to withdraw with him to the great moral bull-ring, when one of those little and most amusing incidents took place, which could only take place in a country such as ours, where a bold decisive character is formed by the adventurous life which it makes

prominent, if not necessary; and where a free spirit and genuine humor seem absolutely to result from the absence of any of those educational restraints, which, in New England, graduate all intellects to an interesting level, making them as completely the creatures of mould and measure, as if God had decreed them, even in morals and expression, to the exquisite republican equality which they deny to none—who have a money qualification and are not Irish and Catholic.

A broad-faced, brown-cheeked, good-humored looking farmer approached the two, and addressing Carter by name as an old acquaintance, turned from him to his companion, and slapping him upon the shoulder with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance, spoke to him in some such language as the following.

“Look ye, now, stranger, they tell me your name’s Varnon, and that you’re a lawyer, and I reckon it’s true what they tell me. You’re a friend of his, Ben Carter—eh?”

Carter answered by introducing Vernon more formally to the interrogator, whom Vernon himself satisfied on the subject of his other interrogatories.

“Well, Harry Varnon,” said the old man in continuation, “I like your face—by the hokey but I do—and without meaning to praise you to your teeth, I tell you you’re a d—d smart-looking fellow; and I want to give you some law business to do for me now, before the court’s over here in Raymond.”

“Your business is his, Mr. Shippen,” said Carter, anticipating the reply of Vernon, “and I think that my friend will do justice to himself and you at the same time.”

“Let the boy talk for himself, Carter. I want to hear him talk since I’m going to hire him, you see, to talk for me in the courthouse. By his face, he ought to have a mighty free speech, and that’s the sort of thing you see that will best suit me at this present. What say you, Harry Varnon, are you willing to argify a little business for me in a mighty bad case.”

The other professed his willingness to do what he could for his client to the best of his ability, and in such a style as to satisfy the old man that he was not likely to prove a bungler in his business.

"That's your sort," said he; "and now look ye, Varnon. The law is agin me here for licking a d—d Yankee trader, that said something sassy to my darter Nelly. She's only a child, Master Varnon, a leetle over thirteen years old, and couldn't 'a meant any harm in what she did; and if there was any harm in it, d'ye see, why I was the only one to blame in the matter. I gin her a five-dollar bill to go to Watson's store to buy some little truck, and he said the bill was a false one and a counterfeit, and spoke so to the child as if she meant to cheat him—and she a gal too—that I got angry as a buster, and went straight off and mounted him. I pulled him out from his shop, and it wasn't at all sheepish—nay, 'twas rether wolfish—the way I handled him. I made his sides ache, I tell you. Well, the long and short of the business, then, is this: instead of coming out and making it a fight after his own fashion, with any we'pons, jist as he might think best for himself, he goes a-lawing me about for damages, and he's put down his bruises and black spots at five thousand dollars; as if his laying up a week, and putting a mush poultice on his shins, and a piece of raw beef to his eyes, should have cost him so much money. Well, you're right to laugh, for that's the true state of the case, and now what do you think you can do with it?"

"You have counsel already?" asked Vernon.

"Oh, yes; one Graham, here, that comes from Monticello; a mealy-mouthed chap that don't please me at all; but he was the best I could get to do the business when I wanted it. He answered Perkins, who is Watson's lawyer, step by step, in the law-papers he put in; and I s'pose did that part of the business tolerable well; but then, he can't talk, Varnon; and he trimbles and looks afeard when the other lawyers talk, and that vexes me, to have a lawyer that's afeard to open his mouth in my business; and I wo'n't have him talk for me if I can help it."

"But, Mr. Shippen, I can not think to supersede Mr. Graham in this business; it is against the courtesy of the bar."

"There's no superseding at all. Graham's quite willing to get somebody to help him; for, look you, he says that he knows nothing that he can say to help me. He says they'll prove everything agin me, and there's no sort of defence that he can

make. Now, he says, if I had only let Watson give me the first clip, he could defend me very well; but wouldn't I ha' been a blasted fool to ha' let him, when everybody knows that a first clip is half the battle? No—no! none of that stuff for me; it may be law, but I reckon there's no reason in it—none. that'll sarve a man here in Massissippi."

"I don't know that I can do much more for you than Graham," said Vernon, modestly; "you, at least know, Mr. Shippen, that the law favors him most who suffers the first injury."

"You can talk, Varnon, and that's something more than Graham can do. You can tell the people what a darned skunk of a fellow that Watson is, to go and scandalize a child—and she a gal too—to call her a cheat and vilify her in front of his shop; and by the Eternal, if that a'n't provocation and injury enough to justify any father for licking the rapsallion that does it, then I don't know any sense in our having laws at all. Well, then, all I want is that you should talk your mind freely to the people about these things. I know well enough, that by the law-books, a man's not to lick his neighbor for bad words. ginerally speaking; but then, you see, here's a case different. Here the bad words is spoken to a gal child, that has a character to lose, and there's no such thing as standing that; and it does seem to me that it's right to make a monstrous difference between blackguarding a man himself, and blackguarding his darter. Well, Varnon, you're just the man now, to hit the skunk hard on these p'int's. Do you score him now, up and down, hip and thigh, for half an hour—half an hour by the watch—and there's a clear fifty dollars in your pocket. Say the word—only half an hour now—I don't want a minute more; and it's a bargain."

Vernon laughed at the humor of the proposition, but seemed disposed to hesitate; when Carter, fearing that some nice point of objection might suggest itself to the youth, and knowing the importance to his present object of his appearing in Raymond only as a lawyer seeking practice, immediately closed with the offer on the part of the youth. The old farmer, however, was not so well satisfied.

"Let Varnon talk for himself, Ben Carter; he's got a tongue of his own, and it does me good to hear him use it. Come.

Varnon, my boy, say what you'll do. I've spoken to Graham a'ready, and he says he's willing. It mought be that you think he a'n't; but between us, he's mighty glad to get the trouble on to some other body's shoulders, for he's plainly told me that it's a darned black and blue case, all agin me, and he's no notion of any way to turn it about to my benefit. I'm candid you see—I don't hide nothing from you. I expect to sweat a little at my fingers' ends for this beating, but, by the hokey, five thousand dollars will swallow me and all my substance, and you must rub that down to a mere sarcumstance. I'm willing to bleed five hundred, but the other is quite too digging. It'll plough me out of the ground to raise it; and root and branch must go along with it. A good talk now, that'll show what a skunk Watson is, and what a shame it would be to let a child—a gal child too—be abused by such a varment, and called a cheat, and vilified as if she was a bad woman at the foot of Natchy hill—will help me mightily, and I don't think the jury will mind the law so much, when the reason and the right of the thing is so clearly in my hand. Do your best, my chicken, and the money's in your pocket."

"Did I understand you that Watson made no defence?"

"Took his beating like a holy martyr."

"What! did he not strike a blow?"

"Not the breath of one; he jist called upon the people to see how I handled him, jist as if he had a liking for it. That's the worst part of the business for me, so Graham says."

"I'll close with you, Mr. Shippen. I'll plead for half an hour."

"Jist half an hour, Varnon; do it well and stick to him for that time, my chicken, and by the hokey, I don't want a minute more."

"I will do it," repeated the youth, rather amused with the aspect of the affair, and the requisition of the farmer; and not so hopeless of his cause as Mr. Graham had been. From that very feature, last related in the case, which Graham thought the most unfavorable, the quickwitted Vernon argued the very best results; and having appointed to meet Shippen within the hour, to make the acquaintance of Graham and confer with him on the business so far as it had gone, the stouthearted de-

fendant left him for awhile, as fully satisfied with the proceeding, as if his case was already won. He was one of those worthy republicans who was not unwilling to pay for his liberties; and the right to speak his mind, though it might be only through the lips of another, was one of those rights which he esteemed cheaply paid for with fifty dollars at any time.

When he had gone, Carter resumed his conference with Vernon, which related, we need scarcely say, to the projected mission of the latter. Other items of intelligence had reached him—which furnished additional clues to those already in possession—of the course taken in his flight by the faithless friend and absconding debtor; but as these matters are destined to have their distinct development in the regular progress of the affair, they demand none of our attention now.

When Vernon entered the court-house he found his new client awaiting him with the “mealy-mouthed” lawyer Graham. A few moments sufficed to put Vernon in possession of all the facts so far as their litigated character had become apparent to the attorney on record. During the course of his narrative, Graham did not scruple, though in the presence of Shippen, to declare his utter hopelessness of his cause; a sort of sincerity which is of very doubtful propriety, since it never yet discouraged a litigant, and has often ruined a very worthy practitioner. It was amusing enough to Vernon to survey the countenance of Shippen as these opinions fell from the lips of his lawyer. How he would lift his eyebrows, and roll his tongue within his jaws, and then turn away exclaiming—

“Never you mind, Charley Graham—never you mind—there are more eggs to be hatched this week, than was ever laid by your mother’s best hen; and some of the chickens, let me tell you, will be long spurred before they chip the shell. Only half an hour, Harry Varnon; only half an hour, my boy; but let it be well talked.”

At length, in its due place upon the docket, the long-expected civil case of *Watson v. Shippen*, sounding in damages, of assault and battery, was called, and the several parties responded accordingly. With the first sounds of his name, Shippen perched himself behind Vernon, and renewed his exhortations and his

promises. The plaintiff, Watson, was also present—a huge mammoth-feeding sort of person, half as large again as Shippen and having the appearance of one, who, if he had not utterly lacked the spirit, could have annihilated, or at least, have swallowed his assailant. His downcast look, halting, hesitating but sly manner, sufficiently denoted the cold, calculating and cowardly wretch—such as Shippen had described him—who could wantonly insult the young girl, whose indignant father he dared not face, and could not contend with.

His attorney, Perkins, opened the case with considerable spirit, passed slightly over the provocation by which Watson had drawn upon him the wrath of the defendant, and dwelt with proper details of law and fact, upon the enormity of the outrage which the latter had committed; described the cruel manner in which his client had been dragged from his dwelling into the public thoroughfare and beaten by the big-fisted pugilist, whom, in his passionate exaggeration, he made a giant, while the plaintiff was diminished to a feeble and delicate person, whose Christian forbearance, while receiving the injuries complained of, was the subject of most unbounded, and, it may be added, most unmerited eulogium. After this, it seemed something of an anti-climax to show that a physician's aid was called in to heal his hurts; particularly as the cross-examination determined the extent of this attendance to be little over three days; and the medicaments employed to be of little more cost than "eye of newt and toe of frog." A pea poultice was shown to be one of the most successful applications of Doctor Shinbone, and the application of the lancet, his most serious operation. With these proofs and the commentary which he made with so much unction upon them, Mr. Attorney Perkins, was willing to close his side of the case.

"You see," said Graham, in a half-whisper to Vernon; "it is as I have told you. He has proved everything, and our case is to be made out of his witnesses only."

The words, spoken however slightly, were audible to the keen ears of the defendant behind, who, smarting with the declamation of Perkins, retorted before Vernon could speak.

"And a good case, too, Charley Graham, if a man had it in him to bring out. Up and at him, Harry Vernon, and give

him enough of it. By the hokey, Charley Graham, you talk as if your liver was all cream color."

A sly twinkle of Vernon's eyes was perceptible to the court, as, arising from his seat, he coolly took out his watch, and noted the precise minute before he commenced his operations. The bargain, meanwhile, which Shippen had made with the strange lawyer, to talk for him half an hour only, had got into considerable circulation, chiefly with the assistance of the defendant himself; and the curiosity was general, not less to hear the young and handsome stranger, than to see what he could make of his limits.

Vernon did not belie public expectation. Cool in temper rapid in reflection, and singularly fluent of speech, he commenced his task by reviewing briefly the evidence which had been given. He dwelt with much more emphasis than Perkins on the gross insult which had been offered to a young child, of good parents, and one of a sex, which needed, from the delicacy of its structure, the kindness and indulgence of man; and could not live either in his harshness or disesteem. This harshness, he proceeded to show, was quite hostile to that claim which had been so eloquently made by the opposite counsel, in behalf of the Christian meekness of his client; this meekness being the result of his cowardice, and not of his Christianity; since it was very visible in his encounter with the man, and was singularly wanting to his deportment in his interview with the child. "It is very well," proceeded Vernon, "to insist upon the integrity of the laws, to prevent the brutality of violence, to compel the strong arm to desist from strife, and refer to the authorities assigned by society for such purposes, to redress its wrongs; but there are some cases," he said, "where outraged Humanity becomes a rebel; and when, to wait for the dilatory process of the laws, might be to ruin her for ever. In all cases, where the reputation or the virtue of a woman—a wife, a sister, or a daughter—are at stake, the sudden blow of the outraged relative is a blow struck for Virtue herself, and in compliance with laws which are infinitely more sacred than any that can be framed by man. And, so universal," he continued, "are these laws, that I can not bring myself to believe that his honor, who now sits upon the bench, and you, gentle-

men of the jury, or any man of proper spirit and feeling, could forbear, in like circumstances, to do as my client has done. Ay, gentlemen, even if the place of sanctuary which the ruffian had chosen for his retreat, had been the altar of God itself, rather than the counter behind which he sells his wares, it would not have shielded him from your honest anger, any more than the latter place has protected Watson from the just vengeance of a father.

“But I do not rely only on these points, gentlemen of the jury. There are others scarcely less important to be dwelt upon. Watson has come into court clamoring for justice. I should say he has already had it—that never was justice made so clearly manifest as when Shippen punished him for the defamation of his daughter. He founds his claim, as every man must, who comes into court, upon his strict compliance with the laws. But his eloquent counsel has not deemed it sufficient to confine himself to this modest claim. He not only asserts him to have borne the part of a good citizen, but of a most becoming Christian. ‘Look at his meekness under stripes,’ says Mr. Perkins, ‘and you have the very deportment of the old apostles under like indignities.’ Gentlemen of the jury, it is a new doctrine to be taught here—this meekness under blows—this calm, Christian toleration of injuries—this patient bending of the shoulders to any assault. But the counsel has himself proved quite too much for his case and client. He has shown you, by the evidence, that, so far from being meek under his suffering, he, at the very moment, called upon the bystanders to witness—not his courage in resenting injury—the courage of proper manhood, which always forbears insult, and always repels it—but the blows which he submitted to, that they might be counted down and paid for in money. This base creature, gentlemen, this pretended Christian, had no abhorrence of the shame to which he was subjected; had no consciousness of the disgrace and degradation; had, it seems, no actual feeling of the blows, while he consoled himself with the reflection that they were to be paid for; that he should get money for every stroke; that his blood was to be weighed in an opposite scale against five thousand dollars of my client. He comes into court not for justice, but for money. He comes not to sustain the

laws, for he himself violated them, when he slandered the innocent daughter of this old man ; but to speculate, like a miserable pedler, upon what may be made out of another's violation of them. Does such a man come into court with clean hands ? Does he not come into court with the basest of all base feelings in his soul ? And would not such a man as this, who thus barter his blood for money as freely as another Judas, barter his very God for a far less sum ? I have no sort of doubt of this myself. I believe, as conscientiously as I do that I now stand before you, that neither your lives nor your honors could be safe in such hands, were it profitable for him to dispose of them, and were the danger not too great for one endowed with such a dastard spirit.

“Let us go back to that chastisement of which he complains, the dishonor of which he thinks can be all removed by five thousand of my client's dollars ; and I, too, will pray you to give as close attention to it, as was prayed for by my worthy and eloquent opponent, though with a far different object. He called upon you to admire the meekness of this new apostle come down upon earth. Your Christian feelings were exhorted to take pattern after this blessed example of Christian forbearance. Behold this lamb under the furious claws of this lion going about seeking what he may devour. See how he prays for his cruel assailant. Such was the picture of my able brother. Let me pray you to give as much heed to one that I shall draw. See, then, this miserable poltroon, submitting to the assaults of one to whom, in physical capacity, he is a giant—hear him how he shouts to the people. He calls upon all around to see that he strikes no blow himself—he begs them to take particular account of the number that he receives. When jeered by the spectators for such tame and unbecoming submission, he grins, with a miserable delight, even while his foe is kicking him. ‘Never mind, he shall pay for this,’ is the answer that he makes ; ‘for all these kicks I shall have coppers !’ His enemy wrings his nose—‘Ah !’ he cries with a miserable chuckle, ‘that shall cost him a thousand dollars. Let him kick, he will have to pay for all !’ And this, gentlemen, is the sort of person, the Christian, of whom we hear a eulogy that would rank him with any of the apostles that ever was flayed alive in

the cause of God and of mankind. To my thinking, so far from calling him a Christian, gentlemen of the jury, I can scarcely count him human. There is so much of cold insensibility about this creature—something so utterly bloodless, yet so malignant, that, were it not at the same time so very base, I should esteem it devilish, and worthy of Lucifer himself.

“But, gentlemen of the jury, I am not yet done with this part of my subject. I would like to place before you the evil effect of encouraging a prosecution, such as the present, sounding in individual damages; and the ground which I take for my objection is in the very fact upon which Mr. Perkins rests his strongest argument, namely, the patience with which this creature submitted to be beaten. This very patience under blows, I hold to be disgraceful to the manhood of the person, as it would be to the manhood of the nation that submitted to them tamely; and to pay him for thus submitting, will, gentlemen, be paying a bounty to the rankest cowardice that ever degraded man. Every dollar which you give to this mean creature for this affair, is neither more nor less than a bounty to the coward; the effect of which must be to raise a brood of cowards throughout the country. We want no cowards in this country. Our object should be to discourage them, to withdraw from them the countenance of the courts, and the approval, even indirectly, of all honest men. We punish the coward in the field, yet give a bounty to him in time of peace. What a monstrous contradiction—a contradiction not to be reconciled by any resort to common justice or common sense. Let us punish them alike in every case—refuse them countenance in ordinary life, and never trust them in the field. Do not suppose, gentlemen of the jury, that I am disposed by these remarks, to encourage the wrong-doer in his violence, and to drive the weak and unoffending from protection. Had this man, Watson, who is neither weak nor unoffending, made good fight, and been overcome after an honest struggle, by Shippen, I should have been among the first to say that he should have had a few hundred dollars damages; but, under existing circumstances, it is my firm conviction that you will give him only such damages as will carry the costs of prosecution, and dismiss him from the presence of the court with the unmitigated scorn

of all who have listened to the dishonoring testimony, which he has this day, in his own case, produced against himself."

The half hour had elapsed, and Vernon sat down amidst a half-suppressed murmur of applause. Shippen, as soon as he had touched his seat, jumped up, clapped him upon his shoulder, and exclaimed, so as to be heard by all around—

"At him agin, Harry, only for a quarter more, and you shall have another fifty."

The tears were in the eyes of the old man, and the fervency of his expression, the frank, feeling tones of his voice, so opposite as he appeared in every respect to his opponent, Watson, moved the sympathy of the whole court in his favor. But Vernon declined his offer. He felt that he had made the proper impression, and that anything more would only tend to weaken and impair it. He was one of those fortunate men, of whom there are so few in our hemisphere, whether in the senate, the forum, or the pulpit, who know where to stop; and, though flattered by the obvious effect of his argument, so novel, and in some respects ingenious—of which we have given, however, a very feeble report—he firmly resisted all the persuasions of Shippen to renew the speech.

This single fact was not without its effect upon the minds of those present. That a lawyer should refuse a fee for a matter seemingly so easy of execution, and that he should resist—a more difficult matter with young lawyers—the temptation still to talk when the auditors were willing to hear—were events to which our southwestern people are not habituated. The confidence which his refusal indicated in what had been already said, had its influence also. They jury retired from the box, but before the verdict was returned—which, *par parenthese*, gave only nominal damages as Vernon had suggested—Carter entered the court-room suddenly, and in a whisper summoned the young lawyer away.

"The governor is at Mrs. Baxter's, and would like to speak with you a while."

Shippen would have detained him; and released him only with a promise that he should go home and spend a night with him, and see his wife Susan, and Bella, the little girl who had been the innocent cause of the trial, and his plough oxen, and a

fine blood mare that he had just got from Georgia, and a thousand other matters, most of which, at that moment, Vernon might have had for the asking.

CHAPTER VII.

POLITICIANS IN COUNCIL—ESPIONAGE—GLIMPSES OF OUTLAWRY.

“I do accuse thee here,
To be a man, factious and dangerous,
A sower of sedition in the state,
A turbulent and discontented spirit.
Which I will prove.”—*Sejanus*, BEN JONSON.

LET us return to the shed-room in the shop of Hawkins, where we left our quondam friend, the *soi-disant* actor, carousing with his new companion, Saxon. Hawkins had left the two for a while, and during his absence employed himself no less busily than did they, and possibly to more useful purpose. The good liquor, aided by the arts of Saxon—who had his own policy in it—had been productive of its customary effect upon the erratic youth, who was now plainly in the seventh heaven of theatrical hallucination. He treated his comrade to the choicest selections of the old fathers of dramatic literature, and mouthed in the becoming style of the best modern artists. Now he gave imitations of Kean, excelling in the spasmodic hoarseness of his utterance—in the fury of the Pythia without her inspiration—now the lugubrious whinings of Cooper, when declining toward the fifth act; and now the guttural growl of Forrest, when, with singular bad taste, he imitates even the death-rattle in the throat of the obese Vitellius. With much talent, and a good deal of taste for the profession to which he so desperately inclined, the want of a proper education in schools furnishing intrinsic standards, left Horsey entirely open to that worst of all misfortunes to talent in any country—and one which is the particular evil in ours—the formation of his

style and judgment upon models essentially erratic, and unregulated by any just principle. To make a point, rather than to act well the part, was too much his desire, as it seems the prevailing ambition with all our Daggerwoods; and in the course of a brief hour, Saxon was treated to a dozen different readings of all the disputed passages in Macbeth, Hamlet, Richard, and the rest.

It was curious to see with what industry the youth had accumulated authorities on Shakspeare. He had Gifford, Malone, Steevens, Seymour, Rowe, Farmer, and some thirty or forty more at his finger-ends, and could we look at this moment into the little closet which was assigned him as a sleeping-room at his father's house, we should see the works of all these persons, accumulated on the table by his couch; he being also one of those erring persons who read by night in bed.

These books were all he had left to show for the thousands he had dissipated of his father's income; and whether his outlay had been a profitable one or not, would have been of no difficult decision, were the father chosen to resolve the question. To do the youth justice, however, it may be added, that he had learned something of good from the schools, however erring and even vicious, through which he had gone. A knowledge of books, and even of men, infinitely beyond that usually in the possession of persons in his secluded home, had been the result of his wanderings; and the roughness of the country clown had been fortunately exchanged for a manner, which, though it might be sometimes swaggering and obtrusive, was seldom rude, and never brutal or insolent. As a further set-off to his deficiencies, Tom Horsey was a good-natured, generous fellow, who readily forgave injuries, conciliated friends, and took the world always, as the world is required to take its wives, for better or worse. "It's a damned bad world," Tom was in the habit of saying over his cups, "that would not be content to take him too on the same terms."

He did the world injustice, however, as Saxon strove busily to convince him. The cool, wily outlaw, for such he was, listened patiently to all the youth's recitations, and even encouraged him to continue them by suggesting the quotations; but, at decent intervals, he would contrive to insinuate a side ques-

tion touching other matters and in relation to persons, by which he contrived, in the overflow of the youth's garrulity, to get from him everything within his knowledge in regard to his father's concerns, and those of Carter his lodger, and Vernon his guest. Some particular interest seemed, in his mind, to hang over the probable proceedings of the latter; and all his remarks, even when he spoke of playing—the topic on which Horsey could always be commanded—were calculated to fill the latter with the persuasion that Vernon was about to go up the country.

“If he does then, Saxon, by the pipers, I must pay for the music; that is to say, I must treat according to the bet between us—for then, I shall take it for granted it is as you say; and he's going up to join that booby Tilton's company—though he's but a poor codling if he does. That fellow, Tilton, is the merest dolt and dunderhead, if you believe me, that ever bowed to an audience. What the devil can he hope to play himself? and as for his management—management indeed! ‘A fico for the phrase’—the thing can't answer, Mr. Saxon.”

“Perhaps not, Mr. Horsey, yet what is the poor fellow to do? ‘Young ravens must have food’—you know the quotation?”

“Ay, ay, ‘mine ancient,’ are you there? But let that humor pass! It is my doubt that this chap Tilton is but a crow;—and will never get his corn in this field. If he can, God speed him, I say, and help him to a better mind and finer figure—matters in which he needs all the help that God and man can give him. As for the figure, I would not be his tailor for all the cloth—there would be more cutting to be done on the man than the stuff. What I chafe at is his chance of failure, which is so great—for failure in a new scheme, throws back the period and the prospect of success; and the thing, which in good hands might, nay must, be successful, would, I am free to take another bet, be sure to fail in his.”

“But if he gets good actors to begin with, Mr. Horsey.”

“Ay, that alters the case, but when did you ever know a fool choose wise help? It is scarce a thing to be hoped for, however much desired.”

“What of this young fellow, Vernon; if he be one of the company?” insinuated Saxon.

"You know my thought on that point. Dad says he's a lawyer, and he as good as told me the same thing himself. I'll look into the business when I go home. But, let him be as you think, and still I can say nothing of Tilton's choice. Harry Vernon may be a smart chap enough, and certainly looks like one, but the stage requires something more than that. Is he a reader, say you; has he discretion of points; knows he his author; knows he his audience; and to sum up all in little, has he the divine gift, the born intelligence which makes the actor a born actor, as completely as the poet is a born poet, if one at all? These are the requisites, Master Brook, and a fellow may be smart at law and smart at physic, who would show but a dull ass upon the stage; as I have seen a chap make a fine speech at muster grounds from a stump, who sat a horse like a jackdaw. To speak plainly, though I would not have it reach Harry's ears, my best reason for doubting his being an actor is that I believe he has no turn, no talent for the stage. I like Harry so much already, that I should be sorry to see him fail."

"But why not join Tilton yourself?"

"Ah, Saxon, your question takes me all aback. If it were not this d—d fool Tilton, who will spoil everything, and, like others who are as great fools as himself, though probably better actors, he will be casting himself in all the first characters. If I could be sure—"

The sentence in which he was probably about to show the weakness of his heart in its yearnings toward the old vanities which he had so recently and solemnly renounced, was cut short by the sudden entrance of Hawkins.

"Horsey," he cried on entrance, "I am afraid we shall lose that bet with you. I have just got away from the courthouse, where I left your friend Vernon in full argument."

"The devil you did. Said I not, said I not! But what's the business—what's the case—murder, rape, burglary, battery?"

"Battery, battery! He defends old Shippen against Watson, whom he drubbed for insulting little Bella, his daughter. Watson got no more than he deserved, and your man Vernon's serving him like all the world. I think the jury will hardly singe Shippen's skirts, though Watson thought to smoke him to

the tune of two or three thousand dollars. Vernon's put a new color on the colt, and people who thought him rather black when he was first carried into court, now look upon him as a rather pretty cream. He'll get off slick and easy; that Vernon's a smart fellow."

"By the ghost of Cæsar, but I must hear Harry, I must. What say you, Mr. Saxon, will you go along? what say you, Hawkins?"

An expressive glance of the eye, which the latter gave to Saxon, led him to decline the invitation, and Hawkins pleading business, the actor set off alone. He had scarcely taken his departure when Hawkins, in a hurried and somewhat agitated manner, taking Saxon farther into the apartment, and closing the inner door, remarked—

"Would you believe it, Saxon; the governor has just got in from below."

"Ah, indeed; he comes alone?"

"Yes, and has gone to Mother Baxter's. But you take it very coolly. Will you not be off?"

"Why should I take it otherwise. I know not that I have anything to fear from his coming," was the calm reply.

"How! said you not that you knew of advisers having gone to him from Alabama of that d—d ugly business of Grafton; and of your course from the Black Warrior, across to Mississippi."

"Yes! But this is no trouble to me here. These advisers tell of my aiming for the Yazoo, but nothing of my being so low as this. Raymond is the last place where he would think to find me."

"What can he come for then?"

"That is a secret I should like to fathom. Can't we contrive it, Hawkins. You have a room at this old woman's?"

"Yes: but it's monstrous dangerous. It is risking everything."

"True; and there are cases where everything must be risked, if anything is to be saved; and this is one of them. It is important to find out how much of our secret they know. If they have a list of names in Mississippi, the owners of them must take tracks for Texas without more delay. There is no saving

them else, and I misdoubt that this fellow Vernon is employed on some business above against us, which, it is absolutely necessary that we should gain a knowledge of."

"But this pleading speaks against it. The youth seems really nothing more than a young beginner at the law on his first circuit."

"That may be, and there is no good reason why a young lawyer should not now and then try his hand at a more profitable business. A governor's proclamation, with a reward of two or three thousand dollars, is no bad inducement to a confident youth to try the capture of an outlaw. I must see more of this youth and more of the governor before I leave them; and the long and the short of the matter is, that we go to your room at once. He is even now, you say, at Mother Baxter's."

"Even now—and more—another matter of which I forgot to speak—Carter has been with him ever since you came."

"And Vernon lodges with Carter! see you not; can you doubt, Hawkins? If I do, it is only the more resolutely to see how far they are linked together, and to ascertain their objects truly. We must see to it. I will leave you and take the right hand side of the way toward the courthouse. Send Jenkins round to the crooked oak with my horse, that he may be conveniently in readiness. I may have to scud on short notice. That done, take your way to Baxter's, and meet me at the entrance. Perhaps it would be quite as well to send the old woman into the kitchen, or on some wild-goose errand, that the coast may be clear. See to it now, Hawkins, with all your eyes; for we are in no sort of danger *here*; nobody *here* will suspect us, unless we blunder through stupidity or haste."

Saxon looked carefully to his pistols, which were well-concealed in the bosom of the overcoat he wore. Nobody would have suspected, under the calm, cool, dignified movement, the doomed outlaw, standing on the brink of danger, and thoughtful only on the means of extrication from perils that environed himself and comrades on every hand. His bowie-knife, that dreadful instrument of summary and sanguinary vengeance, whose edge, sharpened to a razor's keenness, was rendered still more terrible by the condensed weight of a sabre thrown into

its back, was adjusted in his breast so as to answer the first movements of his hand; and, with the confidence of one who has prepared himself at all points for the worst, the bold man, who is probably already recognised by the reader of our previous work (Richard Hurdis) as an old acquaintance, left the shop of his comrade and emerged calmly into the thoroughfare

Proceeding with corresponding boldness, he went forward where the throng was thickest, entered the courthouse, looked on and listened for a brief space to the proceedings, then took his way slowly to the house of Mrs. Baxter, where he had appointed to meet with his comrade. Hawkins had so contrived it, as to keep the passage clear. He led him through it with slow and cautious footsteps, up the narrow stairway, and thence into his chamber, which lay on the left hand, being the room opposite that which the governor occupied. The little landing-course at the head of the stairs—a sort of platform, some five feet wide, was the only space that separated the two chambers. When Hawkins had closed his door, he gave Saxon to understand that but a few moments had passed since Carter, accompanied by Vernon, had gone into the governor's room, and his intelligence quickened the anxiety of Saxon to inquire into the purport of their business. Though scarcely governed by so keen a motive as the outlaw, let us, however, go forward more boldly than himself to procure the desired knowledge, and at once enter the chamber in which the three are now assembled. We shall lose little by our delay, since the preliminaries of introduction—those little formalities without which the world does no business civilly—occupied the brief space between the entrance of Vernon to the conference, and the beginning of our own and the outlaw's espionage upon its progress.

“Our mutual friend, Mr. Carter, assures me, Mr. Vernon, of your perfect capacity to do for me a certain business which is important to the interests of the state, and which requires as much secrecy and courage as intelligence. Can I hope for your assistance?”

The youth answered him briefly, that any service not inconsistent with that upon which he was at present engaged would

be cheerfully undertaken by him, which would subserve the interests of the state, and oblige his excellency.

"But your excellency is not aware, perhaps," he continued, "that I am to leave Raymond, possibly to-morrow, for the Yazoo neighborhood."

"It is that fact, in part," was the reply, "which prompts my application. It is in that very neighborhood that your assistance will be required. I need not add, that, apart from the state's commission which will be given you, an adequate compensation will be assigned for the time which may be consumed in the service, and the degree of labor and peril to which you may be subjected."

"It will give me pleasure, sir, to serve the state, even without these considerations; but, I must remind your excellency of one qualification with which I prefaced my first reply. If the duties required at my hands, shall, in any way, affect the object which I have in view, and which I must, under existing circumstances, esteem paramount to every other, I shall be compelled to decline the service, though I do so with extreme reluctance, as a loss of opportunity for honorable employment. Will you oblige me, sir, by suffering me to know the nature of the business."

"Certainly. Briefly then: we have advices by express from the authorities of Alabama, which inform us of a singular and extensive plan of outlawry, which has its source either in that state or in ours, and perhaps in both, and numbers no fewer than fifteen hundred adherents in the two. This number has, I doubt not, been grievously exaggerated. If it be not, we are in very sad condition. Of one thing these letters assure me, that many of our citizens, hitherto held in good esteem, are sworn confederates of these banditti, and in one disguise or another trail through all parts of the state, and sometimes operate in fixed places with even more effect, as they appear under characters the more specious and imposing. Then we have positive intelligence that some of our justices of the peace belong to this band, and we are scarcely in doubt that a militia officer, of whom the public has hitherto thought very highly, is himself a leader among these outlaws. Their commander-in-chief, one Clym or Clem Foster, made his escape

from certain citizens of Tuscaloosa county about three weeks ago, and was reported to have crossed over by way of Cottongin Port within the last ten days. A man answering to his description was seen in that neighborhood about that time. Thus, you have in brief the aspect of affairs. You see one of the chief difficulties in our way. To move openly, and with a force drawn from any other quarter of the state, to act upon that in which these scoundrels congregate, would be only to expel them temporarily, and we should fail probably in taking a single prisoner. To place a special commission in the hands of any person in that neighborhood, of whom we are not sure, would be equally indiscreet, since it might be placing the whole power of the state, for the time, in the control of one of the very banditti whom we are striving to subdue. We want a bold spirit, who will act vigorously when occasion serves; but one who can keep his secret, work himself so adroitly as to sound those with whom he mingles, sift the worthy from the unworthy, and embody them in the proper moment for the capture or destruction of these wretches."

Vernon heard the speaker with close attention. We have summed up in short, what was only delivered in a dialogue of some length, in which the questions of the former necessarily led to the revelation of many facts, of which, it is quite probable, the governor spoke with some reluctance and with very imperfect knowledge. When these facts had been obtained the answer of Vernon was immediate.

"Your excellency shall judge for yourself of what service I can be to you in this business, and how far it will prove consistent with my present objects to accept of your appointment. While you will not deem my reluctance to arise from any lack of desire to do my duty to the country which protects me, you will, at the same time, hold me guiltless of the vanity which would assume me to be possessed of those endowments which you esteem, and correctly, to be necessary to the proper success of the person you select. You are probably, in part, advised of the mission upon which I go to the Yazoo. I am in pursuit of one, also a criminal, who, for aught we know, may be one of these very banditti. Will it be my policy to undertake this

trust, when its execution may lead me into conflicts and necessities which may defeat my present purpose?"

"Will it not?" replied the governor. "The capture of one of the band, the discovery of the secrets of one, and that one not the person whom you pursue—will these not be rather more likely than not, to lead also to his detection?"

"I am afraid not, your excellency. Apart from the obvious consequence of taking upon myself an additional employment, which must be, to a certain extent, the diversion of my attention from, and my pursuit of, the one object; these felons, according to your own showing, are in possession of so complete a system, that unless you strike them, by a simultaneous blow upon every link of their operation, you endanger the success of your whole project. No one man, setting out as I do, with so little preparation, and without concert with any other operatives, can possibly hope to effect anything in this double business. It would give me pride to act in this matter, as your excellency desires; believe me, sir, I feel deeply this honorable compliment; but I am perfectly convinced, that, unless it positively happened in my way, to act upon the information you give, I should esteem it unwise to go aside from my path, and jeopard the success of that other purpose, which, as it is of vital importance to Mr. Carter, is, I assure you, of little less importance to me."

The governor seemed much chagrined by this answer, and strode the chamber with ill-concealed disquiet. Vernon resumed.

"When, however, I decline the assumption of this charge, as a distinct and responsible appointment, your excellency, I do not mean to say that I would not do anything, if called on in a moment of emergency, to promote the welfare of the state and secure its peace."

"You would confer on this subject with another, should I send him to you—you would act with him if it took you not off from your present business?" demanded the other eagerly.

"More, sir; I acknowledge your right, in the state's emergency, to call upon me to risk my life should that be necessary."

"Enough—you shall have blank commissions to use at your discretion, and I will give you—Stay! did you hear nothing, Mr. Carter?" And as the governor put this question his finger

pointed to the inner door, leading to the stairway. A slight rustling movement was evident at this moment, and instantly approaching it, his hand was extended to the latch, when it partially unclosed without his aid, as if in consequence of the sudden withdrawal of one's grasp from without. The dark outline of a man was perceptible through the aperture.

"The outlaw himself, by heaven!" cried he, as he beheld the indistinct outlines of the person without. "It is Foster—it answers the description."

With these words the governor rushed to the door with the intention of pursuing, but his purpose was defeated by a hand from without, which, grasping the handle, drew it to, and held it firmly against all his efforts. Meanwhile, steps were heard as of one descending the stairs. The moments were precious, and with that promptness of movement which was a prime and distinctive feature in the character of Vernon, and tallied well with his keen intellect, no less than with his great personal strength, he threw his weight with a bound against the obstruction, and bore it with a single effort from its hinges. The frame-work was sustained only by the person from without whose grasp had hitherto secured the door. In another moment the arms of the youth were wrapped around him, and, in spite of his exertions, he was hauled into the room to answer for his essay at eavesdropping.

"What means this violence, gentlemen," demanded the eavesdropper, who was no other than Hawkins.

"Who are you?—what do you here, and where is the other ruffian, your comrade, sirrah?"

"Hard words, sir, and you shall answer for them," was the reply of the fellow. "I am here because I lodge here—that is my chamber, and by these stairs I descend from it, and go to it when it pleases me. Take your hand from my collar, young one, or I will hurt you."

He accompanied these words with a threatening action, which Vernon, to whom they were addressed, only answered by hurling him to the ground with as much ease as if he had been an infant; setting his knee upon his bosom, and drawing thence the bowie-knife, the possession of which he suspected, as he saw the fellow unbuttoning his vest.

"But the greater villain must be secured. I saw his person—I have seen him before, and I am sure I can not be mistaken. It is Foster—you heard him descending—he can not be far—let us take this fellow forward till we can deliver him to an officer, and set some in pursuit."

"You carry me not from this house," growled the fellow from beneath the knee of Vernon. "This is my house—my castle—and you shall answer for this, or there's no law for a poor man in Mississippi."

"You shall have law enough, my man," replied the governor. "Ben Carter—since this fellow will give us the trouble to carry him—run to the sheriff, and bid him bring his posse. We shall provide him closer lodgings for a time, and he may then play eavesdropper to those who are more of his own complexion."

In due time Hawkins was delivered to the sheriff, and pursuit commenced after the outlaw; but the hounds were soon at fault; the fox had baffled them, and was now out of reach—taking a zigzag course within five miles of Raymond, as coolly as if there were no sheriff within fifty. By night he was back again, and lingered long enough to hear from those who little suspected his interest in the narration, a long story of his own escape, and of Hawkins' commitment. The story went that he and the governor had grappled fairly—that the governor had got all the advantages, but that he had got—off. Which was pretty nearly the true state of the case.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR HERO TAKES THE HIGHWAY—"THE STAR" IN CHASE—
PLAY AT CROSS-PURPOSES.

—"I hope that I shall ride in the saddle. O, 'tis a brave thing for a man to sit by himself! He may stretch himself in the stirrups, look about, and see the whole compass of the hemisphere. You're now, my lord, i' the saddle."—WEBSTER.—*The White Devil*.

THE necessary documents had come, court was over in Raymond, and on a cold, frosty morning, while yet the day only glimmered with a faint redness through the eastern chinks, Harry Vernon, booted and spurred, prepared to mount his good steed, on his journey of adventure. Carter stood beside him, having given his last instructions. He was visibly affected with the thought of parting from one whom he regarded as warmly as he could have done his own and only child; and this feeling was much increased, as he beheld the unreluctant and prompt determination of the youth to undertake and execute to the best of his abilities, a labor which involved the prospect of so much fatigue, and, possibly of so much peril. This last consideration, at the moment of separation, pleaded more strongly in the old man's mind than any other.

"And yet, Harry, my son," said he, "when I hear of this banditti, and behold the audacity with which they act, I am afraid to let you go. God forbid that you should risk your life that I might recover or save a few thousands, which I should be suffered but a few years to enjoy, and which I need not now. It is not too late—let William Maitland go, and prosper, if he may, with his ill-gotten treasures—why should I send after him, to possible loss, one that I value so much more? Why should you undertake this toil, which takes you from a profession which you have so honorably begun; and carries you among the profligate and the dangerous?"

"Nay, nay, my more than father," replied the youth affectionately, "you make the risks too great, and the object less important than it is. There is but little danger, I trust, as I shall manage the pursuit; and it was only in order to avoid unnecessary encounters, that I declined accepting the governor's offers. On this point I shall be well guarded. I shall proceed slowly, moderately; neither seeking the crowd, nor yet avoiding it; and only penetrating into forbidden places, when there are probabilities of my finding William Maitland within. The loss is much greater than you think for, since, though you are liable only for the amount of your bond, yet, in a moral point of view, you are not free from responsibility for all the money over that amount, of which he has robbed the bank. Your readiness to answer for his honesty, implied in your guaranty for so much money, induced their trusts; and, though they may demand of you but thirty thousand dollars in law, in morals you owe it clearly to them to spare no exertions which shall, in addition, get them back the other sums for which they have no responsible guaranty. A moment's reflection, under your own convictions of what is right, must clearly establish to your mind this truth. As for my danger—set your heart at rest, as I shall certainly set mine. I have a cool, deliberate temper, which will not flare up at every fool's folly, and I am, I think, sufficiently under the guidance of prudent thought, to keep from the heels of any brute in his moment of anger. Give me your prayers, my dear sir, when I am gone, and I know not that I shall find or need any better protection."

"Yet it is needful, my son, that you have some of the more carnal engines. You have weapons?"

"Enough, if pistol and bowie-knife can ever be enough. I have a pair of pistols, and a small but heavy knife. I doubt if I shall need them."

"I have then only to repeat what I have said before, Harry: I have no desire to drive this man to utter destitution. He has children—the children of Ellen Taylor—and she in her grave. God forbid that I should do anything to make them destitute or wretched. Let him yield everything, and, as I have told you, I will secure to them the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars, under such restrictions as will keep it from his creditors, and

from his own profligacy. I need not say to you, however, that he is one upon whom you can not rely ; you must have him in your power ; you must keep him in your power, and the money must be disgorged, before you sign papers. Avoid, I need scarcely tell you, all unnecessary exposure of his villany, for her sake, for the sake of her children, both of whom are females."

"You have written, sir, to Mason at Vicksburg?"

"Yes, and to Fleetwood at Benton, and Mercer at Lexington. They will provide you with funds when called upon."

"There is nothing more to be asked," said the youth, leaping to his saddle. "I will write to you at Natchez when necessary. God bless you, my dear sir, and keep you in health—farewell!"

He did not stop to hear the parting accents, tremblingly uttered, which the good man sent after him in blessings. In ten minutes the forest had shrouded him from sight, and the tearful eyes of Carter strained after him in vain.

Let us return to Saxon, otherwise Clement Foster, the outlaw of Alabama. Having satisfied himself, by personal inquiry, of the condition of Hawkins, his companion, in Raymond, he left the village at midnight, and, to verify the scripture phrase which denies all rest to the wicked, he rode nearly fifteen miles at that late hour of the night. His course lay somewhat across the country in the direction of Grand Gulf. He came at length to a little farmstead, which stood in a half-dilapidated condition at the head of a "turn-out," that was barely perceptible at any time from the road, and only obvious at night to one familiar with it. Here he routed up two men, who proved his confederates, and with whom he conferred for an hour before retiring to rest. This he did at length in a shed-room of the hovel, which, it would seem, from the tacit manner in which it was got in readiness for him, without orders, was reserved for him especially. Some portions of his conference with these men, as they may affect this narrative, should be given to the reader.

"Has Jones come up from Pontchartrain?" demanded the leader.

He was answered by one of the men in the negative.

"He will then be here to-morrow, but I shall not wait for

him. He must go on as fast as horseflesh will carry him, and meet me if he can at Brown Betsy's to-morrow night. You can counsel him to come sober, if he comes at all, for I wish him to skulk and follow, and play at point-hazard, perhaps, with as keen a lawyer as rides the Mississippi circuit. Be sure and tell him this, that he may drink his alkalis and purge himself of the whiskey-bottle. It is a day's purgation; but he must do it while he goes. He brings your share of the money from the Atchafalaya business; but, by the Lord Harry, Stanton, money seems to do you little good. You are even now in rags."

"That's because I don't get it by good means, I suppose," said the fellow spoken to, in half-sleepy, half-surlly accents.

"What, do you preach too, sirrah? But—go to bed, and forget not when you waken what I tell you now. You will also remember it, Drake. The matter is of more consequence than you think for, and will swamp us all, if we keep not our eyes open and our heads clear. To sleep—to sleep."

At day-dawn, the outlaw was again in motion, visiting other haunts and dwellings of his fraternity, that lay in his way, while pursuing an upward course that carried him along the waters of the Loosa Chitto or Big Black river. It so happened that this very course was that taken by Vernon, though the latter, as his progress was straight-forward, was necessarily much in advance of the outlaw.

At the time of which we write, this region of country was very thinly settled. The traveller rode forty or fifty miles per day, very frequently without seeing sign of human habitation. and his road lay through swamps that seemed like vast rivers of mire, which his horse, with a feeling like his own, would approach with a footstep most mincing and deliberate. Travel in such a territory is travail, indeed; and to one accustomed only to the stage and steamboat facilities of the Atlantic states, it has the aspect of something even more afflicting. The swimming of creeks surcharged by freshets, and wading through the ooze of a cane-brake, each plunge into which makes the mire quiver around the very shoulders of your horse, would be something of a warning to young couples to stay at home the first month after marriage, in that neighborhood, and not go upon connubial expeditions of two or three hundred miles, just after

the knot has been safely fastened. Its disruption might be no infrequent consequence of such a doubtful practice.

To one like Vernon, however, bold, and governed by a temperament that gloried in a dash of romance, the occasional perils of such a course were lost altogether in the novelty of the circumstances; and he dashed through the creek with a confident spur, without stopping like more wary adventurers to probe his footing with a pole, then drive his horse through the stream, while he "cooned a log" above it.

These little obstructions were not unfrequent in his route, but they offered no impediment to him. The duties of life and manhood, opening for the first time fairly upon his consciousness, were provocative of that stimulus only, which we are apt to see in the forward boy, to whom nothing gives so much delight as being permitted to flourish with the tools of full-grown men. He had neither father nor mother, with painful misgivings of himself, to awaken his own painful thoughts; and, unlike most young men of his age, his heart remained perfectly uncommitted to any one of the hundred damsels, who, in every civilized community, seem always to lie in waiting for fugitive hearts. In short, he had little to lose of positive possession, whether of wealth or affection; he had everything to gain in both respects. His income was yet limited, and for ties, he knew none nearer than that with the worthy Mr. Carter. His present object was calculated to serve himself no less than his patron, though the handsome reward offered by the bank for the recovery of the lost money, or the delivery of the felon, would never have moved the proud young lawyer from his chosen place at the bar, but that the interests of his friend—his preservation, in fact—absolutely required it. But this the reader already understands.

The turn of noon was at hand, and as yet our young traveler had eaten nothing. The thought of himself made him considerate of his horse, a noble animal, the gift of Carter some two years before. A pleasant rising-ground on his right, from the foot of which a little branch wandered prattling across the road, suggested all necessary conveniences for refreshment, the other appliances being forthcoming.

"We will ride, Sylvan, up this hill, which seems grassy

enough to give you a good hour's employment, and, in the meanwhile, Mrs. Horsey's biscuits and smoked beef shall answer my purposes. The good old lady!—how she wondered to find her plate of biscuits missing, and how she routed the cook, and Tom, the waiter, and the whole household, except the true thief, touching their loss. I suppose, by this time, Carter has told her all about it—the why and the wherefore. Good old man! If I can only save him this money, I shall feel that I have done something to deserve the favor which he has always shown me. If mind and body can do this thing, such as I have shall be given without stint or hesitation to the task—so Heaven prosper me in my own purposes hereafter.”

This soliloquy was muttered as the youth rode his horse upon the hill, and led him to a spot where he might graze freely without wandering. He stripped him of the saddle and valise, which he placed beside a log, then seating himself, drew forth his little store of provisions, the biscuits which had been appropriated by Carter the night before, to the probable consternation of his worthy landlady. To have asked for them, would have been to declare the purpose of travel which Vernon had in view, and this, once known to the mother would have been soon known to the son Tom, and through his communicative medium to every third person, at least, in the little world of Raymond. The knife of our traveller was already buried in the smoked beef, when his ear distinguished a sound not unlike that of an approaching horseman. The ears of his own steed pricked upward at the sound, and when it became more distinct, the conscious animal whinnied as if with the joyful conviction that he was about to have a companion. Vernon started to his feet as the horseman came in sight, and was absolutely dumb with astonishment to recognise, at a single glance, the person of our eccentric friend, Tom Horsey. His horse was well heated by hard riding, and covered with foam; and he himself, though chuckling mightily at having found the object of his search, alighted from his steed with the air of one whose bones ached with his unwonted jolting.

“Ah, Harry, Harry! what shall I say to thee, Harry? Shall I call thee a traitor to friendship—to heel it before day-peep, and say no word to the fellow most after thy own heart?”

‘That was the unkindest cut of all.’ I did not think it of thee, Harry! By the ghost of Garrick, I did not!”

Much annoyed at his pursuit and presence, Vernon was quite too much surprised at the event, and too curious to know the cause of the actor’s pertinacity, to express himself as freely, and perhaps as harshly, as he might otherwise have done.

“Truly, Mr. Horsey, I know not what you mean, or what you have to complain of. I am surprised to see you here.”

“You need be; you deserve no such love at my hands, Harry Monmouth. You should have spoken out like a man—though you said it in a whisper. Am I a man to blab? Can’t I be trusted, think you? By Pluto, Harry Vernon, I can be as close as Ben Carter himself, and the dry cock should never have heard a syllable! Bah! I am monstrous tired. That rascally horse goes all one-sided—he has been ruined, by dad, and will never suit any but a lame man again. I do think he has dislocated my hip.”

“Your father’s horse, Mr. Horsey? How can the old man do without him? You will surely return with him immediately.”

“Devil a bit, Harry, devil a bit. He deserves to lose him for not having a better in the stable, and I will trade him off the first chance, though I get one old as Methusaleh.”

“But wherefore are you here, Mr. Horsey? You do not mean to travel, surely.”

“Do I not? Look at the bags! Filled, sir—filled to the muzzle, with my best wardrobe. There’s a Romeo and a Hamlet, two field-officers, and a Turk in that wallet, not to speak of certain inexpressibles, which will do for a dozen uncertain characters. But—this is dry work. What’s in your flask?”

He did not wait to be answered, but clapped the bottle, which lay with the bread and beef at Vernon’s feet, to his mouth, and long and fervent was the draught which he made therefrom.

“Good whiskey that, and whiskey’s an honest beverage. And now, Harry, a bite of your biscuit. You will laugh, perhaps, but, of a truth, I look upon Falstaff’s proportion of bread and sack, as decidedly the best for a traveller in winter. ‘This is a nipping and an eager air,’ and nothing blunts its edge so well as a good sup of Monongahela. This dough stuff makes one feel as dry and crusty as itself. But you do not eat, Vernon.”

"Why, truly, sir, I am so surprised to see you here, that I had almost forgotten that I was hungry. But, perhaps, you bring me some message from Mr. Carter?"

"Carter, indeed! Oh, no! I was quite too sly for that. The moment Jim told me you were off—for it seems he saw you and Carter go to the stable by dawn, or, as he swears, before it—I had just risen to take my antifogmatic; and at the word, I at once guessed what you were after!"

"Indeed! And pray what was that?" demanded Vernon, with some curiosity, interrupting the garrulous speaker.

"Ah, ha! all in good season, my master. You thought to blink me, Harry, but you must know I had a hint of your true business two days before from some clever chaps in Raymond."

The wonder of Vernon increased, but the other suffered him as little time to indulge it as to make inquiries.

"I tipped Jim the wink—set him to saddle Gray Bowline, dad's old dot-and-go-one, and fasten him behind the stable, while I donned my first come-atables, and rammed the rest in dad's old saddle-bags, where I'll show them to you when you please. These I handed to the sooty scamp, who will do anything for my love—when paid in money—and he got the nag caparisoned in twenty minutes, and ready to my heel. Down stairs I went, and—plump!—met the old lady, my ever venerable mamma, in the passage-way. 'Tom,' says she, 'where are you going so soon?' 'Don't ask me, mother,' says I, looking monstrous hurried, and going fast ahead, 'don't ask me, I beg you;' and off I went. In two minutes I was on—and off. A few bounds brought me into the woods, and your track was fresh enough for the eyes of a young hunter. I heard of you once by the way, but—your nag goes monstrous fast, if he goes easy! Mine!—by the petticoats of Ophelia after her drowning—he has skinned me utterly all of one side. I have found you, however, my dear Harry, and I don't value the skinning. We shall never part again. Skin or no skin under my bends, I keep up with you though the devil's brimstone smokes under your horse's tail."

"Indeed, Mr. Horsey, but there go two words to that bargain," replied Vernon, with an air of resoluteness, and a face of but half-concealed chagrin.

“‘Agreed’ shall be one of them, Harry,” replied the unembarrassed actor.

“But how, Mr. Horsey, if I tell you that our roads lie apart?”

“Impossible! they do not, Harry—by my soul they do not! I have the best information on that subject. As I said before, I know your secret, your whole plan of operations, and, by all the blessings of the foot-lights and a fine audience, if you do not suffer me to join with you in the business and share profits, I’ll run against you. I’ll take the morsel from your mouth,

‘And pluck the golden-eyed success away
From your young grasp.’”

“What can this witless fellow drive at?” was the unspoken soliloquy of Vernon, ere he replied to the speaker. “Can he really know anything?—it is scarcely possible. There is some mistake; and I must sound him cautiously.” Aloud:—

“And what may be this goodly scheme of mine, Mr. Horsey, in which your mind is so resolutely bent to share. I am positively puzzled, and know not how it is possible that a purely private business—”

“Purely private, you call it. ‘Egad, before I’m done with it, it shall be public enough. You thought yourself mighty secret in your schemings, and I confess you did blind me for awhile, and I took it for granted that you really had no other object in view than to run the dry course of a lean lawyer, and jog from court-house to court-house, circuit after circuit, picking up your pay in corn and bacon, and getting a bastard fame from speeches as full of words as Gratiano’s, made in cases of trespass, pounding, black eyes, and bloody noses. I give you credit, now that I discover your purpose, for being something bolder, and for an ambition of a more enduring and ennobling sort. But I can hardly forgive you, Harry, for keeping a dumb side to me when you knew my passion. I can be trusted, as you shall see. You will find me a man after your own heart, if your heart be open; a fellow wise enough to speak only upon cues, though otherwise a born rattler; and one who, whatever his woolheaded neighbors may say, can always ‘tell a hawk from a handsaw,’ in whatever quarter the wind may blow.”

“Puzzle on puzzle!” exclaimed Vernon, now more than ever convinced that his companion was mad. “What is it that

you really mean, Mr. Horsey? speak plainly, or I shall suspect you to be a candidate for bedlam or the calaboose."

"Bedlam or the calaboose! Come! I don't like that so well, Harry Vernon. I take it as something unkind, sir, that you should speak in such fashion. But, I see how it is; I forgive you; it is natural enough that you should look on me as one likely to go between you and the public. But you shall find me generous. By the powers, Harry, I care not much where I come in, whether as one, two, or three, when a friend's fortune and desires are concerned. You shall go before, and I will follow, or we will enter side by side, on equal terms, marching to equal victory. Envious or jealous of rival merit, I never was and trust never to become, satisfied that success has twenty thousand hands, and one willing for every bold, worthy fellow that stands ready and dares to grasp it. Harry Vernon, I drink to our joint success."

The actor repeated his draught, but Vernon began to be seriously annoyed by the intrusion, and thought it high time to put an end to it. Never dreaming of the conjecture which had taken such possession of his companion's brain, and ignorant, of course, of the stories which had been told him, he could form no positive idea of the subject of his ravings, and began seriously to consider him a fitting inmate for the calaboose or bedlam, as he had already suggested, to the other's momentary discomfiture. His first movement, therefore, was to restore his spirit-flask to the valise, then, assuming what calmness of manner he could, and taking especial care that while his words should be inoffensive, they should be to the point at least, he addressed him in a manner which was intended to bring his play at cross-purposes to a conclusion.

"You have said a great deal, Mr. Horsey, which for the life of me I can not understand. Pray tell me, without quotation or circumlocution, what it is you mean—what you intend—and above all what scheme it is, which you assume that we entertain in common. I am not peevish nor fretful in my disposition, yet I am not willing to suffer any trifling or merriment at my expense."

"Or, in more legitimate phrase, considering our purposes." repeated the actor—

“‘Though I am not splenitive and rash,
Yet have I in me something dangerous,
Which let thy wisdom fear.’

Prithee, my good Hamlet, smooth thy looks, and dismiss that cloud, full of lightning, that teems in threatening above thy brows. I mean thee no harm, no hurt, no offence. I am a fellow, as I tell thee, after thy own heart, and thou dost wrong thyself no less than me, to be angry with me. Why wouldst thou that I should tell thee in plain, point-blank matter, what is thy business, and what should be mine?—as if thou wast resolved not to know, and couldst deceive me any longer. Dost thou not seek Tilton?”

“Tilton!” exclaimed Vernon in profound astonishment, mingled with something more of good humor than before, as it now became obvious to him that Horsey had blundered upon the wrong man, and knew nothing of his secret, of which he had been in some little apprehension.

“Ay, Tilton, Tilton, the little lamplighter and candle-snuffer and letter-carrier for so many years at Caldwell’s. He, who has now set up to be an actor, a manager, and what not; and is going to open at Benton, where thou and I—if thy stomach be not too proud, Harry Vernon, for such companionship, as I greatly fear me it is—will star it together, to the confusion and admiration of the natives. There! you have it; and might have saved me all this trouble by owning to the truth before. Deny me now if thou canst, my bully rook; thou art not aiming at Benton—thou dost not seek for Tilton—thou wouldst not leave the dry bones of the law, for the wit of Mercutio and the marrow of Falconbridge. In short, thy ambition leads thee not to emulate the Garricks and the Keans, the Macreadys, the Forrests, the Coopers, the—”

The unmitigated laughter of Vernon silenced the actor, whose face of exultation it turned of a sudden into soberness.

“What do you laugh at, Mr. Vernon, I should like to know?”

“Who put this silly thought into your head, Mr. Horsey? Who could have bedevilled you with this nonsense?”

“Bedevilled!—Silly thought! I see nothing silly about it, Master Vernon, and wonder that you should. Do you deny it?”

“Every syllable.”

"What, that you are about to appear on the stage?"

"I do."

"You are not going to Benton to join the company?"

"On my soul, I am not."

"Or wherever the company may act? You go not to join Tilton?"

"I know nothing of the man."

"It won't do—that cock won't fight, Harry Vernon," responded the other, after a pause. "I have the matter on good evidence. Deny it as you may, I believe it; begging your pardon for seeming to doubt you; but the truth is, that all the circumstances tell against you. I am sure you are going to join Tilton, and, my dear fellow, confess the truth; you will not trust me with your secret, for fear that I shall blab it to Ben Carter. But, on my honor—"

"Believe what you will, Mr. Horsey," replied the other with recovered gravity. "I have no sort of objection to any strange notion that you may take into your head; only, I pray that you may not bother me with the mare's nests that you may discover, nor challenge my admiration of the eggs."

"You're angry with me, Harry. Come, my dear boy, hand out your flask again, and we'll take a sup of reconciliation."

"No, sir; I will let you drink no more while you are with me. You have taken a mouthful too much already."

"How, sir, do you mean—"

The swagger of the worthy histrion, who was not apt to be a braggart, and was in truth a good-meaning fellow, was cut short by the sudden and angry interruption of his more solid and resolute companion:—

"Look you, Mr. Horsey, my road lies above, and yours is below, with your parents. Let us separate."

"Nay, nay, Harry Vernon; but you are quite too hard upon me. Don't be vexed with me, because I am a d—d good-natured fool, that loves good company too well to quarrel with it. I don't mean to vex you, but I am resolved, unless you put a bullet through my cranium, to keep up with you to Benton. I'd rather lose anything short of life than lose the chance of a good engagement. So, whither thou goest, thither will I go also—where thou leadest there will I follow—at least, until

the manager gives out the casts, and then, Harry, as thou wilt, and the author pleases."

This resolution, though it annoyed Vernon, as it expressed a determination to keep with him whether he would or not, and might for a while operate against his objects, was yet expressed in terms and a manner so very conciliatory and the poor histrion seemed so completely to speak from his heart, that Vernon resolved to bear with him awhile, nothing doubting, that, when the other found, as he was like to do in another day, that his footsteps did not incline to the place where the actors had pitched their tents, he would be very willing to leave him without more words. He contented himself, therefore, with renewing his assertion that he had nothing to do with the players, and that Horsey deceived himself, or had been grossly misled on the subject of his inclining to the stage. But the reasseveration was of no avail. The faith was infixed too deeply, and with a chuckle, as he mounted his nag, the enthusiastic actor replied—

"Oh, what's the use, Harry, my boy, of keeping up that ball? It must come down sooner or later, and one would think you would be weary of such a sport. Let this humor cool—'it is no good humors.' Look not coldly upon me, for, on my soul, if thou wilt have it so, thou shalt have the choice of the cast whatever it may be, and as for little Tilton, he shall learn, as a first lesson, that we shall neither of us do anything for him, unless we do it to our own liking. And now to horse—to horse—

"Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls."

It was scarcely possible for Vernon to resist laughter; certainly, he found it impossible to keep anger with such a creature; a thing so light, so weak, so utterly wanting in all those timely calculations of propriety and good providence, as to make it seem a sort of brutality to visit upon his faults with harshness. They took horse together, and while they rode, the actor seasoned the way and dialogue with quotations,

"Thick as leaves in Valambrossa."

Vernon strove at every opportunity to disabuse his mind of the error which it had adopted in reference to himself; but his

very earnestness seemed only the more to convince the other to the contrary. His answer to all such efforts consisted only of a half-laughing rebuke to his companion, who aimed at the monopoly of the best character, and was jealous of that interposition and rivalry on his part, which he studiously assured Vernon, at the same time, should never annoy him. The latter gave up the effort which he found so perfectly unavailing, leaving it to time, the general rectifier of man's mistakes, to put a conclusion to this.

CHAPTER IX.

SUPPER PROSPECTS—BROWN BESS—A COTTAGE HEROINE—
BLOOD AN' 'OUNDS.

"How indirectly all things are fallen out!
I can not choose but wonder what they were,
Rescued your rival.

—— If I fit you not
With such a new and well-laid stratagem,
As never yet your ears did hear a finer,
Call me with Lilly, *Bos, Fur, Sus atque Sacerdos.*"

BEN JONSON — *Tale of a Tub.*

YOUTH is not the season for enduring enmities. That is a cold heart and a malignant spirit which preserves its bitterness and asperities through the summer, and in spite of all its sunshine. Harry Vernon, besides being of a just and generous nature, was also of a cheerful and social one, and he soon discovered that there was no good reason for keeping up a cloudy front to the vacillating and wayward creature who rode beside him, and whom an erring judgment, and, probably, fine but misdirected endowments, were hurrying on to his own destruction. By degrees he resumed his kindly manner to the obtrusive but well-meaning actor, and as he found that he could not rid himself of his company, he resolved to make the most of it. This resolution once taken, it required but few words

on the part of Vernon to unlock all the stores of memory and experience in Horsey's possession. The erratic creature, from long wandering into forbidden places, had picked up a wholesale, if not wholesome, collection of anecdote and story. His imitative faculties were good, and he illustrated his scenes by taking off, with considerable humor, the various persons who appeared in them. Shakspeare, too, was at his fingers' ends, and there was no lack of passages, to fill out his own remarks, and enliven their deficiencies. The dog read well, too, with the single reservation, that he had not yet learned that nice and most necessary art of all—that art which scarcely one of our artists possesses in a meritorious degree—of subduing his utterance to the demands of the character, and the capacities of his own voice. This evil results, in most cases, from the too great size of the theatre, which, as it calls for great physical powers of voice, must, except in the case of energies singularly masculine, for ever defeat its nicer regulations.

Horsey had throat enough, and the very best of lungs, and he was glad of any opportunity for using them. The woods soon rang with his sonorous passages, and Vernon, with the feeling of the cautious citizen, always alive to ridicule, could not help now and then looking around him, as if apprehensive that other ears were suffering from those clamors that seemed almost to perforate his own anew.

These declamations, be it understood, however, were not given with the reckless rapidity of one who has nothing beside in store of his own; but the actor ingeniously contrived that they should only occur in such places, in his own dissertations, where they might enforce and illustrate what he said. This was one of his arts additional, by which he contrived that his masterpieces should be brought into play; and, like the fellow who had a gun-story, and in order to introduce it fairly into company, acquired the art of imitating the report of a pistol, so Tom Horsey practised, when alone, those generalizing opinions on a thousand subjects, under some one of which he could always classify the fine things of Brutus and Cassius, Hamlet, Hotspur, and Macbeth. When, with a generous consideration of his companion, and a moderation which few great talkers are prone to practise, he had tired himself fairly down, he came to a halt,

and declared aloud his resolution to pause in time, for fear he should also tire down his hearer.

“But, could you hear me, Harry, when the scene is filling, when the characters are by, the audience silent and watchful, and the curtain drawn—it would be something. You would say it were something, and that I were no insane fool, as some of dad’s friends will have it, and Ben Carter among them. I feel that I have it in me, Harry Vernon, and, by the Lord Harry, but it shall come out. I have never had a fair chance yet, but the time must come, Hitherto, they have taken advantage of my necessity, and I have been compelled to walk through wooden parts, which I scorned to move in with any wasteful animation of my own. Nothing but the delight of being upon the boards, amid the blessed blaze of lights which are nowhere so lovely to my eyes as in a playhouse, could have made me endure the damnable persecution and miserable jealousies of those poor, incapable creatures, that were able to do nothing themselves, and hated the very sight of others who had it in them to do everything. I could tell you stories of the drudgery of the stage, of the malice and the meanness of the actors, of the mercenary baseness of managers, their impracticability and insolence when successful, and their d—d dishonesty when otherwise, which would shock you to hear, and which you could scarcely ever believe. But you will learn for yourself. One week with the little lamplighter—unless you make a hit—and then you can snap your fingers in his face, and kick him with your worst boots, and still have his thanks—one week with him, however, as a stock-player, and you will curse your stars that endowed you with faculties, yet left them at the mercy of such eternal skunks as your generality of managers are sure to be. But let us bully little Tilton, and play our own characters, work our way up the Mississippi, break out like little comets with a double length of tail in Louisville and Cincinnati, and, by-and-by, touch the Park boards—the zenith of theatrical eminence in America, where Mr. Kean told us, with an equivocal sort of compliment, that the taste for the drama was periodical—and then, the devil take the hindmost—hey, for the crown and the triumph, the chariots and the horseman—

“‘A kingdom for a stage—princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene.’”

“Supper first,” said Vernon, “or I shall never sufficiently ascend that highest heaven of invention, to behold with you so respectable an audience, or to regard it with any sort of satisfaction when I do so. Look ahead—see you nothing of a log house? There should be one on the left, a little in the woods. That must be our baiting-place to-night; and, if you will prick up your beast, Mr. Horsey, which, in your own industry, you have been indulging long enough, we shall probably avoid the prospect, of which there is some present danger, of being compelled to sleep in Big Black swamp to-night, with nothing but Shakspeare to keep us warm or satisfy our hunger.”

“And enough, too. He has kept me warm and been my only supper many a night. But, I do see something of an opening, and it is to the left. By the ghost of David, Harry Vernon, an’ if it shall be a large one, we’ll have a few passages—we’ll make a rouse. ‘Because thou art virtuous shall there be no more cakes and ale!’—it is a house—‘ay, and ginger shall be hot i’ the mouth too.’”

“Hush!” said Vernon, with singular gravity. “Be still, if you do not want to lose every chance of supper. Chickens in these parts take to the woods whenever they hear or see a stranger—they know, poor devils, by a sort of instinct, the fate that awaits them.”

“‘Gad, if that be true, it is a very singular fact. Are you serious, Master Vernon?’”

“Serious! Do you think I could jest about such a matter? But, see—there’s the woman of the house. She must have heard you the last three miles. If not utterly out of voice from your late exertions, you will perhaps be the best spokesman here. See if we can get beds and bacon—the chickens, I suppose, unless she has them in coop already, can not be thought of.”

“A very singular fact!” muttered Horsey, as giving spur to his steed, he led the way to the wigwam, leaving Vernon to follow at his leisure.

“Accommodations!” said the woman, who was a somewhat ill-favored person, probably forty years of age, having a face

sober and grave even to sternness, and speaking in accents slow, harsh, and indifferent—have I accommodations for two for the night? Yes, sir, I have; but they are none of the best, and neither of you gentlemen would be much the better of them. Perhaps, you'd better ride farther, and you'll be suited better. The night's clear enough, though it be cool, and, if you're going to strike for the lower ferry, you'll get a place to lie at, ten miles ahead. The upper ferry-house is farther on, but not much, and the road's pretty clear in a starlight. You'd better ride on, I'm thinking."

"Nay, my good madam, that will hardly suit us," replied Vernon, riding up—"we have already ridden near forty miles to-day, having come from Raymond, and I am resolved, unless you positively deny us shelter, to go no farther to-night."

"I'm sure I don't deny you, sir; I only tell you how little we can do here to make you comfortable. We're mighty poor people in these parts, and have little to give strangers to make them satisfied. Now, ten miles beyond—"

"No more, my good madam," said Vernon, alighting from his horse; "we stop with you to-night; and the sooner you give us supper the better. In the meantime, you can tell my friend here what I have already told him, that your chickens have already taken to the woods."

"Chickens—"

The speech of the woman was cut short by Horsey, who had been steadily watching her features with an air of interest, and who now advanced, laid his hand on her shoulder, with a degree of familiarity that made her start and look disquieted, if not angry, as she strove to withdraw herself from so great a freedom. This, however, he would not suffer.

"By the cut of your teeth, as the cheese said to the mouse, I know you, my worthy professor of sassafras and gunja. Brown Bessy Clayton, as I live!"

"And who are you, young mister, that's so free with my name—my name that was, I mean—for though I'm Brown Bess, I'm no Clayton now? What's your name?"

"Why, Bess, you're getting old, my girl—your memory's failing you. Don't you remember me—don't you remember little Tom Horsey, that was your best customer when you sold

cakes and beer at Hogler's mill—that burst your bottles by shaking, and punched your cakes out of the tray by a long pole sharpened at the end?”

“Yes, and got punched for it himself,” responded the woman, as these reminiscences of Horsey awakened her own. “And is it you, Tom—little Tom, indeed? Why, you can eat your cakes now off my shoulder.”

“Ay, Bess, and a bit of the shoulder with it when I happen to be so hungry as I am just now. And so you're married—and who did you marry, Bess?—I hav'n't heard of you for these ten long years.”

“But I've heard tell of you, Tom Horsey. They said you'd gone crazy; and that didn't seem strange, for you always had a little twist in your understanding, and couldn't do things jist like other people.”

“Did you ever hear such a defamation of genius?” exclaimed Horsey to Vernon in a manner of affected misery. “But go on, Bess. What did you hear?”

“Why, they said as how you had turned fair fool, and how they'd got you down among the player people at Orleans, and how they dressed you up in a jacket and breeches, full of colors and spangles—”

“My Romeo, by the shade of Juliet!”

“And how,” continued the woman, “they brought you out before the company, and worried you, jist like so many curs worrying a pig that had got into the 'tater patch—”

“Exquisite comparison, by my soul!”

“And how they all stuck at you with their swords, and how you fell down and pretended to be dead, and then how they dragged you out by the heels; while everybody, men and women, little and big, laughed as if they would split. After that I heard no more of you, and concluded you were dead for good.”

“For good, say you?” exclaimed the actor, as the woman concluded. “Well, Vernon, only think now that this is the representation of one of my best performances—my *début* in *Macbeth*, for my benefit—when it so happened that a cargo of Ishmaelites from Pearl river, that had crossed Ponchartrain that day, came to the ‘American,’ with ‘every particular hair

on end,' to see their 'old schoolfellow, 'Tom Horsey, son of John Horsey, the lame man that kept tavern on the river-road : ' and this is the d—nable report which they carried back to the country in their ignorance and envy. Is it not a most abominable trait in man, that he hates to see his neighbor's successes ? Every whipster with whom he ever hunted 'possum in a dark night, or shelled corn in husking-time, is ready to disparage those talents which he can not rival, and to pull down that merit in a companion which he thinks—and it is—a sarcasm upon his own deficiencies. By Pompey's ghost, it is my own people that have ever been the first to decry my performances, and to wrest from me the just rewards of my labors."

"Well, don't you be running down the Pearl river people, 'Tom Horsey; they're a mighty good sort of people, 'Tom, and I only wish I was back ag'in among 'em," said the woman.

"Selling cakes and beer?" said 'Tom.

"Why, yes, sellin' cakes and beer; it's a mighty good business for the time it lasts."

"Five months at least, Bess—I remember all about it—from May to September, and, if the season was very warm, a month longer. 'Gad! my picayunes melted as rapidly in those months, when I was a boy, as my Mexicans have continued to melt ever since I was a man."

"There was another thing, 'Tom, that they told about you," said the woman.

"What was that?" quickly demanded the actor.

"Why, that you spent your father's money a deuced sight faster than he could make it, and that you are a mighty great—"

"Say no more, Brown Bess; leave it where it is, at the 'mighty great.'"

"Riprobate, I was going to say," continued the matter-of-fact woman; "and I reckon, 'Tom, it is not far from the right word."

"Perhaps not, Bess; but no more of that an' thou lovest me; I am reformed now—grown quite sober—never drink unless when the spirit moves, and I expect soon to confess a working of mind as active as ever was your beer, whenever I can meet with old brother Abrams—"

"Why he's dead!—dead five years ago!" exclaimed the woman.

"Dead, you say! Who could have thought it. Why he was the last regular preacher that I ever heard. It makes me melancholy to think of it; so let's in to supper, Vernon, with what appetite we may. You're married, Bess? Where's your husband, and what is he—what's his name?"

A dark cloud rose and rested on the woman's brow as she heard this question, which she answered slowly and briefly.

"His name's Yarbers—he's a middle aged man, that'll be in, I reckon, directly. But I'm truly thinking, Tom, that you and the other gentleman had much better ride on to the other house. It's a short ten miles, and an easy road."

"Can't think of it, Bess; by the soul and substance of the fat knight, I can not. We must partake of your hog and hominy to-night; and I'm surprised, Bess, that you seek to send us forward without supper. You were not wont to be so inhospitable. Marriage has changed you, Bess."

"I reckon it has, Tom," said the woman, "but I'm not wanting you to go without supper. I could get it ready for you in a short five minutes, and you might easily ride then."

"By the Lord Harry, Bess, but this is altogether too bad! What! pack us off the moment we've swallowed our coffee, on a long road in a dark night. I tell you, Bess, it won't do. We sleep in your house to-night by the peepers of that blessed saint Monajahadje, of the Chickasaws, that slept every day in the week but the eighth, and never opened one eye, unless it was to see if the other was shut."

"Well, just as you will, Tom, but, perhaps, the other gentleman here?—"

"The other gentleman here is my Castor; we are Castor and Pollux, the inseparables. He never goes without me, and I never go without him, and so, strange as it may seem to you, we never go without one another. If we never go without one another, we also never stay without one another, and, Bess, I have drawn this proposition almost syllogistically to you, in order that you should understand that we shall sleep together in the same bed, provided you can not spare us one apiece."

"Ah, Tom, you're the same rattlepate that you ever was, and the older you grow, the wiser you don't grow. I can't understand the half you say."

"Not understand! Did ever one hear the like, when I stated the case with singular simplicity in order that you should understand."

"Well, well," responded the woman, "but let Mr. Castor speak for himself. He don't say much, and I reckon it'll be the easier for me to understand him. I was saying, sir," here she addressed herself to Vernon, "I was saying, Mr. Castor—"

"Ha! ha! ha!" was the ecstatic roar of Horsey, who made no attempt to correct the error.

"Vernon is my name," said his companion gravely. The old woman gave Horsey a single look of reproof, then turning to Vernon, proceeded to repeat what she had already said touching the propriety of his riding to the next tavern, which was at the lower ferry, and only ten miles off, for his night's lodging. Her reason for so singular a suggestion arose from the alleged poverty of her accommodations.

"There is something strange in all this; there is something secret here," was the unexpressed thought of Vernon, and he drew his conclusion as much from the earnest yet bewildered countenance of the woman, as from her words. His self-communion went farther: "I am on the borders of the Chittaloosa, and my labors should now properly begin. Every mystery may have mine in its keeping, and I must search it if I can. This woman, it is evident, would send me off rather than Horsey. I will stay."

He spoke this determination aloud.

"Mr. Horsey has spoken for both of us, Mrs. Yarbers, and we must stay with you to-night. Forty miles is rather more of a journey than a horse should be made to bear who is going to a swamp country, and I am almost as anxious for sleep as supper."

"Well, if you will," said the old woman ungraciously, as she ushered them into the hall, and summoned a negro-girl to take the horses to the stable. The saddle-bags, valise, and saddles, were carried into the house. The travellers drew chairs, rough, country-made, high-backed, and seated with untanned deer-skins stretched across and tacked beneath; while the old lady, opening a wooden cupboard of plain pine that was fastened by pegs to the rear wall, drew forth a couple of common junk bottles,

one of which, as she said, contained Monongahela, and the other honey, as a sweetener.

"A dram will comfort you after your ride, Tom, though if you drink whiskey as freely as you used to drink the sassafras, you'll have an enemy in your head that'll be sure soon to trip your heels."

"I am commanded to love mine enemies, Bess, but I try to weaken them a little, so that our wrestle shall be even; there's no water here?"

"Mary's gone for some to the spring, Tom; my darter Mary; she'll be here in a shake."

"You've a daughter, too, eh? What sort of a girl is she, Bess? A good, smart, active, little creature, I suppose, a—"

The door opened, and the sudden appearance of the daughter in question, silenced the speech, and utterly confounded the speaker for an instant, as he found himself confronted by as tall and pretty an adversary in the shape of a damsel, as ever met the eyes yet of an enthusiastic and self-assured young man. He started to his feet, caught the vessel, which she bore, from her hands, a little clean white piggin with a gourd hanging upon the handle, and setting it down upon the shelf which was placed for it, exclaimed, all in a breath—

"This your daughter, Bess?—this your Mary?—by the Capulets, but she is the very Juliet of the host. I must have a kiss, Mrs. Yarbers—for auld lang syne, Bess—by all the damask roses that ever tried to look like those cheeks, and faded out of envy. I must, Mary—why, Mary, I am your mother's old friend—I'm your great uncle, Mary, an innocent old man—you need not fear me, I must—there's no use—I must."

The girl, who was probably not more than sixteen, perhaps not that, retreated with no less dignity than modesty, while, between jest and earnest, her mother expostulated with the bashaw; but it is probable that neither the reluctance and possible flight of the damsel, nor the expostulations of the mother, would have availed to protect her from the parental tenderness of the venerable man, but for the sudden interposition of another party, whose mode of proceeding was of a more summary and imposing character. The door opened while the strife was at

the warmest, and the husband of the dame entered, followed by a sturdy youth of about twenty years of age. Horsey was too much interested by the game in hand to look behind him, and it was only when the youth, without a word, passed in front, and placed himself between him and the maiden, that he became conscious of the unexpected interruption of his desires. The intruder's presence seemed almost as much annoying to Mary as to the enamored actor. She shrunk back with quite as much promptness from her champion as from her assailant, and this movement probably encouraged Horsey with the idea that his chances were even better now than before.

"My worthy rustic," said he, "give me but a moment; another time I will acknowledge your presence, but just at this time—nay, stand aside, I pray you, that I may do grace to the lips of that little Juliet there—a moment—but a moment."

Suiting the action to the word, Horsey put forth his hand, intending, with the utmost gentleness, to put him aside from his path; but his hand had scarcely touched the shoulder of the other, when, putting forth all his strength, he planted a blow between the eyes of the actor, that gave him a very comical vision of two crossed rainbows, the ends of which were most singularly tied together. Down he fell like a bullock in the same instant, and his prompt enemy jumped upon him, and twining his little finger in the locks of the fallen man, prepared to thrust his thumb into his eyes.

"Touch my eyes, man, and I put you to death as sure as a catastrophe," exclaimed Horsey, characteristically, as the effort of the other had brought him to all his consciousness. The fellow would scarce have heeded his threats, but by this time the vigorous arm of Vernon had grasped him about the middle, and flung him to the other end of the room. We have omitted the screams of the women, which were as loud as usual, and as rightly timed. Nor have we deemed it necessary to say that old Yarbers—a fellow almost overcome with fat—offered sundry expostulations to the course of his companion, which, however, as he never hurried to enforce them, were as little heeded by the fierce young rustic as were the screams aforesaid.

The effect of Vernon's movement was more obvious. The youth glared now upon him and now upon Horsey, who had

taken advantage of the interval to recover his feet, as if doubtful which to attack. His hesitation resulted from no want of hostile feeling, but simply from the consciousness that there were two to contend with now; and one of them, however easy he found it to trip the heels of the other, had convinced him that the play in his case could never be all of one side. While he stood glowering and glaring, Vernon, like a man satisfied that he had done all that was required, resumed his seat, and with the assistance of the woman of the house, made such an acquaintance with its master, as suited the relation of guest and landlord. The good humor of Horsey did something to restore the quiet of the rest.

"Young 'un," said he, "you've bloodied my nose, and done it tolerably well, with some skill, but scarcely with sufficient firmness. That up and down blow, though it would fell an ox if hit squarely between the eyes, is a monstrous dangerous one if the enemy is watchful. It leaves your whole side exposed, all your ribs, not to speak of your diaphragm, a blow in which would make a fat man uncomfortable for life. You, sir," turning to Yarbers, "you would find a blow in your diaphragm a singular inconvenience."

"Ay, sir, or anywhere else," said the person addressed, with a good-humored laugh, and scarcely knowing how to understand the strange creature who confronted him.

"And now, Mary," continued the actor, stopping the blood with his handkerchief, as it still continued to issue from his nose, "you were the cause, though the innocent cause, of this young rustic's incivility. You must help me to some water, that I may remove 'this filthy witness from my hands'—and nose. 'This is a sorry sight,' Harry. By the way, I must not forget to thank you, Harry, for taking that fellow's fingers from my eyes."

"If you don't mind how you talk, stranger, I'll put 'em there again," said the other, his wrath duly increasing with the seeming composure and good humor of Horsey.

"I hope not," replied the latter, "as well for your sake as mine. Had you succeeded, my good fellow, in your first attempt, you'd have been, by this time, on the longest journey that you have ever taken in your life, and doubtful whether

you'd have found easy ferriage across the river, unless your pocket is lined with more picayunes than I think it holds at present. What, my lovely Juliet, you have the water, have you?"

"There's the piggin, Mr. Horsey, and here's the towel, sir," said the damsel, whose sympathies for the hurts which he bore so good-humoredly, seemed to have made her less shy of him than she had shown herself at first.

"So, you know my name already, chuck—a good name, Juliet—and your mother knew it many days before you, though I must have known you once. There—there's a spot still, my Juliet!" he exclaimed, as, having wiped his face, he placed the towel upon her hand, and before she could be conscious of his design, threw his arm about her waist and inflicted upon her cheek as unequivocal a smack as ever came from the hasty application of lip to lip. The young gallant was again in arms, but Horsey was ready for him; and the father, probably dreading that the latter would use some weapon in the strife, as he had already intimated, interposed his authority with sufficient promptitude to prevent the encounter.

"If *we* don't get angry, Mr. Mabry, I wonder why should you? Besides, this gentleman's an old friend of Bess, and Mary's but a child to him."

"Not so fast—not so fast, old gentleman!" cried Horsey, who was considerably nettled at this imperfect sort of chronicle; "a child, indeed—a woman, a fine, lovely, ripe, bewitching damsel, this same Mary of yours. She's no more a child than I'm a grandfather. Now I come to think of it, there can't be much difference between us in age—not so much as to make a difference in any material respect. Let me see, she's about sixteen, and—egad, Mrs. Yarbers, it can't be more than fifteen years since I bought cakes from you at Hogler's, and I going to Hugh Peters's school. I was only ten then—sixteen and ten—why do you talk of her being but a child to me? Count for yourself—sixteen and ten are twenty-six all the world over, except Connecticut, where, they say, it counts more—and I'll take Bible oath I'm not a syllable older. What say you to that, sir? There's no young woman of sixteen in Mississippi who, if she has any sense, will find fault with a man of twenty-six."

Vernon was amused at the pains which the actor took to vindicate his youth; and the result of his calculations seemed still farther to increase the annoyance of his rustic rival, who, after a little while spent in a condition of fever-heat, got up and left the room. He was followed out by old Yarbers. Meanwhile, Horsey continued a playful chat with the mother and daughter—his philosophy under his bruises seeming to commend him to additional favor, and both listening to him with pleased attention. But, catching the eye of Vernon, in the midst of one of his random speeches, he made him a sign, then rising, declared his intention to see what sort of night it was, and left the house. Vernon soon followed.

CHAPTER X.

CLOSING UP PEEPERS ACCORDING TO "THE SCIENCE"—HOW TO SQUARE OFF WITH A BULLY BOY.

Lycus. That spark jealousy falling into his dry melancholy brain, had well near set the whole house on fire.

Tharsalio. No matter, let it work; I did but pay him in's own coin.—
GEO. CHAPMAN.

"I AM decidedly one of the best-natured mortals in existence," said Horsey, when Vernon joined him in the little area in front of the cottage, "but there is something, Harry, in being knocked over, that would turn the sweet milk sour in the best of bosoms. I bore with this thing as patiently as possible while in the presence of the women folk, but my gall has been rising for the last half hour, and I can stomach it no longer. It must out, and nothing will help me, Harry, but a clip or two at the muzzle of this same Master Mabry. You must stand by, and see fair play while I give him quits. Doubt not that I can do it, Harry. 'I have the back trick simply as strong as any man in Illyria.'"

"It will make matters worse, Horsey. You were wrong in

pressing upon the girl at first. She is something more than a child, and the customs of our country—”

“I know all that, Harry, and had I not been a sort of chicken under the wings, at one time, of the good old clucking hen, her mother, I had, perhaps, never thought of kissing the girl; though, by the divinity of Rosalind, there’s justification enough in the lips themselves for the rashness of my pursuit. The guilt is equal between the tempter and the tempted. She who pouts a pretty mouth under one’s nose can no more blame a body for snatching a civil kiss from the offender, than you can blame a hawk for stooping down upon a plump partridge that runs too freely from under the briers, and tempts the appetite it is yet unwilling to satisfy.”

“You are supported in this notion,” said Vernon, with a smile, “by an authority no less moral than that of Dr. Johnson, who says that if you tempt a man you do him an injury, and if you overcome him you share his guilt. His view is also sustained by the decision of an English justice, who once committed the master to prison for laying money in the servant’s way, and at the same time discharged the servant who stole it.”

“’Gad, Harry, those were wise fellows. If I had known so much could be said in my favor, I had not stopped short at a single kiss. That man, Johnson, didn’t he once write a play?”

“Yes—a tragedy—”

“I’ll read it—a devilish clever sort of fellow. A fellow that knows so well how to justify a kiss, must have made a very amorous piece of business of it. Wasn’t it so, Harry?”

“Nay—quite the contrary, I believe. The play was rather a cold performance—the author was a phlegmatic. It does not follow, you know, that a good judge is a good performer; and to kiss a pretty woman is a movement of one’s blood rather than his thought—an instinct, not a reflection. But—to return to our subject. You can gain but a paltry satisfaction, Mr. Horsey, by punishing this young man; and I should say, judging from mere appearances, that he is too stout for you. He has more brawn and muscle, and though not so tall is a much heavier man.”

“You shall see, Harry. I have what he has not. I have the trick of fence, and I have played long enough with muffles

to venture a little upon the bare mutton. The stage is no bad school for acquiring agility of motion in foot and fist—a keen eye and sudden thrust makes me more than a match for this pudding-headed fellow, as I shall convince him no less than yourself, when I have laid eyes on him for awhile. Here is the path which I suppose will lead us on their route, part of which I saw through the window. They made for yonder thicket, where, I reckon, we shall find them.”

“I will stand by you,” said Vernon, with recovered gravity, “and see you through with this business, but while we keep together, Mr. Horsey, I trust, for my sake, you will provoke no more difficulties. I have some right to expostulate with you, I think, as you have constituted yourself my companion, not merely without my desire, but against my wish. My objects in this country are such as might suffer material detriment from any collision with the people.”

“Pshaw, Harry, my dear boy, ‘still harping on my daughter,’ still at thy old ‘humors;’” replied the unthinking fellow “It won’t do, I tell you. Our objects are the same, though the range of character may be somewhat different; as I confess myself to be somewhat erratic, and a jump from Romeo to Dogberry has been a folly of mine more than once already. When you see me resolved, head and heels, to go on with you ‘to the last gasp with truth and loyalty,’ why, what the devil’s the use of shamming any longer? You can’t get rid of me; do what you will, unless, as I told you before, you put a bullet through my brains, and that were only to scatter them worse than ever, without doing me or yourself any great service. Be generous, man—do as I have done, make a clean bosom of it, confess—and we will down upon little Tilton with a concerted plan of operations which shall make the rascal stare. We can do as we please then with all the arrangements—get our own terms, declare our own casts, and—

— “‘All furnish’d, all in arms,
All plumed like estridges, that with the wind
Bated like eagles having lately bathed:
Glittering in golden coats——’”

By the way, Harry, you have not seen my dress in Hal. You shall see it to-morrow—you shall see me in it ‘rise from the

ground like feathered Mercury'—made a d—d ugly hole in dad's crop to pay for that dress, I tell you. What would the old fellow say, were I to count up to him the cost of stars and spangles, beaver, crosses, images and plumes, in cotton bags. Ha! ha! I think I see him now, his game leg in air, his sound one thundering on the floor, his eyes shooting out from their spheres, red and fiery, and his voice hoarse and choking, still resolute to roar the anathema, which sticks in his throat, at last, more rigidly than a better sentiment in that of Macbeth. Oh, Harry, what a scene!—But hold!—Here's our enemy."

A bright moon helped the progress of the several parties. Yarbers and young Mabry stood in a small open space among a clump of pines apparently in earnest conversation, as the two approached them. Mabry held his horse by the bridle, one foot already in the stirrup, as if—the important matters of which they spoke being fairly discussed—he lingered only for a parting word. That they were seriously engaged was likely enough, since they neither saw nor heard the approach of the two strangers, till they had already passed into the same opening with themselves. It was then that Mabry, as if apprehending the object of his enemy, or, as was more probable, desiring an opportunity to renew a conflict in which his success had been so unequivocal already, withdrew his foot from the stirrup, and once more threw the bridle from his steed's neck over the stunted sapling which had before confined him. This done, he kept his place where the eyes of the two had first encountered him, while Yarbers, with some agitation of manner, advanced and addressed them.

"A fine evening, gentlemen—fine for a walk, and—"

"Ay, or for any other purpose which needs a cool temperature and a clear sky," was the ready answer of Horsey, who, at the same time passing by Yarbers, continued his speech to his companion—"I am glad this clear moon has helped me to find you, young un, since I should not have slept so comfortably with the thought of being your involuntary debtor. I bear, sir, some tokens of your favor on my cheek. I am not willing that you should go unrequited. Do you understand me, sir?"

This apostrophe did not seem at all ungrateful to the rustic, who had rather wished than expected so early an opportunity

to renew his punishment of an offence which he had shown himself so unwilling to tolerate, and which had been repeated so audaciously before his eyes. That he could punish the impudent stranger, he had no sort of doubt. His own physical prowess had been generally acknowledged among the young Spartans of the neighborhood, and the sudden and easy overthrow of Horsey by his single blow, but a little while before, and the good-natured forbearance of the latter immediately after, had given him but a mean idea as well of the courage as of the strength of his opponent. That Horsey should, with open eyes and cool deliberation, come once more within his clutches, was no less satisfactory than surprising; and boldly confronting him, he answered his salutation in language that left little possibility of a reconciliation being effected by either of the bystanders, both of whom attempted a consummation which was so proper and desirable. Yarbers strove with Mabry, and Vernon, though to a far more moderate extent, with Horsey. He knew that the popular sentiment made the course of Horsey one of retributive justice only, and his first overtures being unsuccessful, he forebore renewing them, and patiently waited in silence the progress of events. Yarbers, also, after a while, gave up, as useless, the effort to mollify the champion on his side of the hill, and the parties at length stood fitted, both ready and anxious, to "feed fat the ancient grudge."

Nothing surely could have been more curious than the difference of mood which the two exhibited while in this position. Mabry, at first, like a young bull simply bent on mischief, approached his enemy with slow steps, his rising temper indicated only by occasional sudden jerks of the head, and a slight fitful stamping of the feet. A muttered growl escaped his lips at intervals, and his fists were clenched and opened alternately—his long fingers, the nails of which were quite as threatening as any other premonitory symptom of danger, being sometimes thrust upward, as if, of themselves, anxious to rend from their sockets the eyes of all who beheld them with hostility.

Vernon regarded this threat as so unequivocal that he interposed, and insisted upon "an up-and-down, straight fight, fist, head, and feet, but no gouging—no rough-and-tumble;" but this was to deprive the enemy of one of his most favorite weapons,

and that which he meditated to use with more malignant efficiency in this strife than any other.

"I fight as I please—according to my own fashion—and let him do the same," replied Mabry. "If he's afraid of my fingers let him say so, and I'll let him off."

"Afraid of your fingers, you catamount!" exclaimed the actor with contemptuous scorn, and a coolness that was really edifying; "use tooth and nail, my good fellow, if you please, or if you can. Don't trouble yourself, Harry, about me—'egad I'll swallow him, claws and all, though his scales were as rough and large as those of the biggest alligator that ever picked his teeth with a cypress on the banks of Pontchartrain."

"You will, will you?" cried the other, the foam gathering about his mouth, his teeth gnashing with rage, and his whole body in motion, like that of the bull, whose gradually accumulating fury, moves it from petty mischief to a destroying madness. He bounded from the earth, ran round his enemy, slapping his thighs with his hands the while, in the most savage fashion, and at length, with a whooping shriek, imitated from that of some wild beast of the forest, he threw a summerset, his feet aiming to strike the breast of the actor, who followed all his movements with eyes and hands in constant readiness.

The preliminaries of Mabry had warned Horsey of the mode in which his attack was likely to begin, and for which he prepared himself. It must not be forgotten that Horsey was Yorkshire too—that is to say, he was quite as well accomplished in the arts of the forest-fighter as was his opponent—with the additional advantage of knowing other arts which were even of more avail in such warfare as the present. The heels of Mabray were no sooner in the air, than the actor, sinking on his knees, removed the mark which they were meant to strike; but, rising the moment after, he sprang to the spot where the other had alighted, and dealt him a blow between the eyes which gave him an apparition of the four moons of Jupiter, with a very fine display of cross-fires playing in the centre, such as never yet blessed the vision of Herschel or Dick. This tumbled him over for an instant; but, nothing daunted, though confounded, he renewed his attack in a different form, and with a caution which had been more advantageously

exercised in the first instance. The actor, no ways elated, but seeming to regard the proceeding, so far, as one which had been the result of the plainest calculation, calmly approached his enemy, speaking as he did so, apologetically, as it were, to the two spectators for continuing the fight.

“Blow for blow is quite enough in all ordinary cases; but this fellow tumbled me unawares, and in the presence of the women, and, by the valor of Orlando, he shall have another fall, ere our accounts balance. This I have sworn to, Harry—as firm an oath as if I had pressed my lips on the pocket Shakspeare. I will give the lad a lesson which he will remember whenever he has occasion to take his measure by that of mother earth. Are you ready, young un?”

Once more they stood before each other—the language of superiority which Horsey employed, goading his rustic opponent to a degree of ferocity which made him forget his hurts; and conscious of his superior strength, he rushed in upon the actor, employing no art, and only seeking to come to the close hug—the grapple of sinews—in which lay his chief and only hope. But Horsey had no disposition to gratify him in this desire. He well knew the danger to him of such an issue. Once closed in with, his “cunning of fence” would avail him nothing; and once down, his eyes had no farther security against the long claws which had already been stretched out to pluck them forth.

It was fortunate, perhaps, that the rage of his enemy deprived him of his deliberation. His blind attack was not dangerous. His approach was met with cool, keen-eyed determination—a characteristic in which Vernon never could have conceived his companion to have been so strong. Talking all the while, and quoting as much Shakspeare as ever, he parried the blows of the rustic, for a while utterly forbearing to put in any of his own. At length, as if he had yielded a sufficiently fair time to his opponent’s play, he exclaimed—

“Now, sir, is my turn. I will close up your eyes, without putting you to sleep; though, let me tell you, it would be very easy for me to do that too.”

“I don’t fear you, d—n you—I’ll down you yet!” roared the other in a rage of fury that increased with every failure of his own efforts.

"Your right eye first!" said the actor, answering this ebullition at the same moment with word and blow; "and now your left!"

Both blows took effect, in spite of the desperate efforts of the victim to defend himself, and he lay at the feet of his foe almost without motion. Yarbers assisted him to rise, but he was in no condition for farther conflict. Blinded and staggering he stood, and still his lips breathed nothing but defiance.

"The fellow's game," said Horsey. The voice, the words, roused the instinct of hate anew in the vanquished man, and he struggled in the arms of Yarbers to rush once more upon his foe. Restrained in this, his hand suddenly plucked a spring-knife from his bosom, the blade of which was instantly shot out, and, but for the timely grasp of Vernon, he had sheathed it in the body of the man who held him. The weapon, spite of his struggles, was taken from him, and a stupor which followed, seemed to possess his mind and body with equal apathy. He murmured incoherently while it lasted, his words consisting mostly of bitter denunciation, which, to the surprise of the two travellers, seemed chiefly to fall upon Yarbers.

"You're a villain, John Yarbers—you would shut my mouth up—wouldn't have me tell what I know—and have made your villains do this. But I will speak—I'll write it down—I'll declare your roguery to all Madison. They shall know who—"

"He raves!" exclaimed Yarbers in no little agitation; "you've beat all the sense out of him, Mr. Horsey, and he don't know what he says. But don't you mind him. Go home at once. Bess is waiting supper for you by this time, and there's no need that you should wait. I'll tend to him, and see him carried home."

"I'm truly sorry I had to thump him so hard, Harry," said Horsey apologetically to his companion, as they took their way back to the cottage, "but I had sworn it, you know, and couldn't so well get off. Besides, it's absolutely necessary now and then to make an example of these fellows. They rely on superior strength to be insolent, and nothing would have pleased this chap so much as carrying home my eyes as a trophy. Years hence he would have a history for Dick Jenkins, and Jim Dobbins, and Peter Pinchback and a dozen others, of the dandy

from below that he met at Yarbers' house, and 'how he cotch'd' 'imitating the patois of the country, "'how he cotch'd the chap mighty soptious with the gal, and how he gin him the cross-buttock, and, before he could say Jack Robinson, had a finger in his shock and a thumb in his eye, and sent him off with the blind-staggers and two holes in his forehead that could make no use of specks, though he was mighty glad to wear them;' and then, to prove the truth of what he said, he would bring forth a bottle of eyes preserved in whiskey—my eyes with fifty others, the Tom's, Dick's, and Harry's, the Ned's, Ben's, and Peter's, the Billy's and Timothy's, that have been the heroes of the barbecue and gin-shop from time immemorial—all in attestation of the superior excellence of the claws that plucked them out. The eyes of Tom Horsey preserved in whiskey! Whew! The thought makes me shudder again. Eyes, Harry Vernon, are absolutely necessary to an actor."

"Keep yours about you as a traveller. You have made an enemy of this youth, who will not forget you. We travel in a wild region, and the securities are few for life and limb. A man may be tumbled in these swamps, by the shot of the unseen assassin, and the wildcat alone will find out his hiding-place. You, who have no sort of reason to be in this neighborhood, can not too soon take yourself out of it."

"To-morrow, Harry—you would not have me set off to-night?"

"No—to-morrow will be time enough. Return to Raymond, set yourself in safety and your father's mind at rest."

"Ha! ha, boy! Say'st thou so? Art thou there, true-penny? Now hear me, Harry Percy, I look on it that you fear me—I hold thee jealous of my attributes, my attitudes, my carriage, my certain something, which, being peculiar to the individual man, is vulgarly called genius. I will outshine thee before Jim Tilton—outdo thee—take the rag off the bush in Benton; and leave thee 'the mere lees to brag of.' You give me counsel but no confidence—why should I keep terms with thee? Urge me again upon this matter, and I declare against thee. Thou shalt know me as a rival rather than an ally; and I will foil all thy best points with my own. Look to it, Harry—the gall rises within me."

Vernon regarded the speaker with mixed feelings of pity and vexation. But the monomania was too strong to be overcome by argument, or resisted by anything short of violence—a measure to which, as there was no present necessity to rid himself of his companion, there was no occasion to resort. Suppressing, therefore, some stern expressions which had risen to his lips, he suffered the other to chuckle in the prospect of his theatrical superiority, only consoling himself with the idea that before the close of another day he should be rid of his thoughtless but well-intentioned tormentor; and he, disabused of the unhappy error which had probably, more than anything beside, seduced him from the home to which he had only just returned.

When they reached the house, the actor resumed his random and rhapsodical chit-chat with all around him, as if nothing had happened either within or without to discompose him for an instant. The hostess he reminded of old times, and of a thousand practical jokes which he had played, of which she herself had been more than once the victim. With a fresh memory he accompanied the vital requisites of narration, lively comment, and felicitous gesture; and, speaking with all the frank exuberance of boyhood, which his playhouse habits had been rather calculated to increase than diminish, he had the satisfaction of seeing the blushing Mary watching and listening with an attentiveness scarcely less sweet and anxious than that of “the gentle lady wedded to the Moor”—her white neck stretched forward—her head bent toward him—her lips slightly parted, and in her eyes that glistening eagerness of gaze which betrays mingled pleasure and curiosity. It is more than probable that the likeness between his own situation and that of Othello, forced itself upon him when he made this discovery—for a moment after, without any preface, he began, half aloud, to mutter the fine description of the scene—

“These things to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline,” &c.

The summons to supper, twice, thrice repeated by the hostess herself, scarcely succeeded in diverting him from this theme and stopping him in the full swell and torrent of his declamation. But the old lady was already handling the coffee-pot, and there

was no time to finish the quotation; yet, as if to revenge himself for the interruption, he seized the hands of the damsel, who still sat, almost as inattentive to ordinary matters as himself, and gently pressing them the while, he conducted her to the vacant seat beside his own at the table.

CHAPTER XI.

TREACHERY IN CAMP—POLITICIANS AMONG THE OUTLAWS.

Vot. You stand here, my lord, unseen, and hear all;
Do I deal now like a right friend with you?

Ans. Like a most faithful.—SECOND MAID'S TRAGEDY.

VERNON retired early to his couch, which stood, with that of Horsey, in an adjoining shed-room. He was pleased to find clean white homespun sheets allotted him; and, looking around the apartment, involuntarily congratulated himself that so tidy a damsel as Mary Clayton made up the beds and aired the chambers. Clear water in a clean white goblet stood on a chair—for there was no other washstand—on the back of which hung a couple of towels of coarse homespun, bleached by long use and good washing to a whiteness like that of the sheets. These little matters attested some larger degree of civilization than the externals of the mansion had prepared him to expect; and were the fruits, most probably, of better days and associations, which Mrs. Yarbers had brought with her from the lower country. Certainly they were only becoming features in one who had traded so long in cakes and beer to the common satisfaction. Yarbers himself appeared to be a slovenly, coarse creature, to whom the neatness of a household was not likely to be a subject of much consideration.

It was fully an hour after Vernon had retired before Horsey followed his example. He sat up talking with the hostess, to whom his sudden reappearance after so long an interval had brought back as many associations as her ancient features had awakened in him; and the ball of conversation, so busied were

they mutually in asking and answering questions, was seldom suffered to fall for more than a single moment in all that space of time.

It would be difficult to say whether the old lady took any special pleasure in the chat of the individual in question. It is more than probable she would have found the same in that of any other young person who had presented himself at the close of day, and begged a shelter for the night. Age likes to enliven itself with the fires of youth, as the venerable monarch of Israel became conscious of a living warmth from the embraces of the young maidens who were placed beside him for that purpose. It seems like the pouring of new mountain-streams into exhausted channels, and impelling into consciousness and motion the choked and stagnant fountains of life. The heart grows young in the contemplation of youth, and a momentary forgetfulness of its own decay is the consequence of that revivification of memory which confounds the past with the present; or rather sends the mind back from the bleak eminence of age which it has reached, and where it stands stiff and frozen, to the green and flowery valleys below, from which it has risen at first, but to which, save by the aid of memory, it can never, never more return.

There may have been, indeed, some little occult policy in the gracious demeanor of Mrs. Yarbers to the dashing and good-natured actor. She was not without that social instinct which is called cunning, and did not fail to recollect that Tom Horsey's father was one of the stanchest proprietors in all Hindes county. It had not escaped her eye that her old customer for cakes and beer was really very much taken with the appearance of her lovely daughter, and here, to use the phrase of the sea-logician, was a "concatenation accordingly."

Perhaps, were it our cue to prosecute this inquiry still farther at this moment, it were not difficult to find strong sanction for the suspicion which is here presented to the mind of the reader; but this might be anticipating other passages. Enough to say, that Mrs. Yarbers was not pleased with her husband, with his relations, and her own position; and, as a mother, regarded the existing influences of the latter as highly detrimental to the fortunes of a child whom she loved, naturally and

necessarily, as a mother should; but to whom she gave additional regard, as, contemplating her through the medium of her pride, she saw in her beauty a possession which lifted her heart, and warmed her vanity, and made it a sorrow in her mind when she reflected that such charms were destined to ripen in the shade, and, like the fruits of the untrodden forest, to ripen unprofitably, without eye to admire or lip to taste.

This was a subject upon which her mind was apt to brood, and it need not occasion our wonder to be told that the instincts of one brooding thus, would not be unlikely to result in practices not very dissimilar to those of the professedly managing mother in communities of more artifice and fashion. From the first moment when Horsey declared himself and renewed his old acquaintance with her, the fancy had floated in her mind that his coming was a special providence; and this fancy, fixed firmly at last, she resolved to lend all her powers to the consummation of the thing she wished.

With this resolution, Mary was suffered to sit up long beyond the usual hour, listening to a conversation which, enlivened by playful remarks and pleasant anecdotes on the part of the actor, was very agreeable to a young creature who had as yet seen nothing of the world; and the mother even assumed the performance of many of those tasks which, in ordinary periods, were commonly allotted to her daughter, that there might be no obstacle offered to the formation of an intimacy between the two which promised to realize her desires, and which, so far, had advanced with tolerable rapidity. The absence of her husband was favorable to her plans; and, it may be, that some impulse was derived for their provocation, from the fact that these were calculated to interfere with his. He, too, had purposes in view for the damsel—though not his daughter—which were something less than agreeable to the mother; and the open avowal of his preference in behalf of young Mabry had been the signal for her declared hostility to his pretensions. Thus matters stood at the period of which we write.

When Horsey retired from the hall, which he had not thought to do until Mary disappeared, and certain admonitory yawns from the mother denoted that condition of declining consciousness which could not long do full justice to his good stories and

choice quotations, Yarbers had not returned. But Horsey had been but few minutes in his chambers before the outer door of the dwelling was heard to uncloset and his heavy tread sounded along the floor. Horsey had challenged his companion's attention the moment he entered the room, but the latter had discouraged him, by declaring a very carnal desire for sleep—an excuse which, at that moment, the buoyant actor was unwilling to regard as worthy a single consideration; and he rattled on without intermission for a while, until, undressed and buried in the sheets, the animal obtained the ascendancy, and his tongue, taking advantage of the circumstance, assigned the task of declaring his whereabouts to that distinguished member his nose, the extraordinary industry and capacity of which was soon a matter of general notoriety.

To this moment Vernon had not closed his eyes. His mind was just in that condition of quickening cogitation when, yet unpossessed of its definite purpose, it compares plans, analyzes its resources and dependencies, and from pregnant and critical doubts conceives and gathers hopes and resolutions.

There was much in the position of Vernon to keep him watchful, and the smallest unusual event was calculated to make his blood bound, and his fancy spring into activity. Thus, after Yarbers' return to the cottage, and while he meditated a thousand different courses of conduct for the better prosecution of his leading object, his ear, quickened by thought, under the influence of an imagination warmed and strengthened by the drowsy midnight horn that sounded throughout the world of silence, caught the sudden baying of a beagle, and a crowd of suspicious fancies thronged upon him.

Once, twice, thrice, the loud, deep, prolonged note sounded faintly through the apartment, and then the footstep of Yarbers was again heard, slowly crossing the floor from the rear to the entrance of the house. The lifting of the latch followed, the door was opened, and again closed. Silence succeeded for a moment; then arose a stunning bay from the hound, almost at the threshold of the dwelling, a prolonged note like that which had awakened the attention of Vernon a few moments before.

This was singular enough. There were evidently no dogs

of any kind about the premises at the first coming of the travellers, and though they might afterward have come home with the master of the house, yet it was highly improbable that such had been the case, else wherefore had they heard nothing of them when they sallied forth to the meeting already described of Horsey with Mabry? Besides, it was scarcely possible that a farmer on the outskirts of the then Mississippi border, should so carefully exclude his dogs from the same apartment with himself.

Vernon was in the mood to conjecture a thousand strange matters, and to convert into causes of suspicion many things that might be innocent enough. To one in his situation, and with his objects, this was sufficiently proper; and the occasion for his excitation in the present instance was well founded. The beagles that were in the wood then, run not on four legs; and the last sound that reached his ears, issuing from the lungs of Yarbers, was an annunciation to a companion that the coast was clear. Under the shade of a spreading oak, a hundred yards from his dwelling, he was joined by no less a person than our old acquaintance, Saxon.

"You have lodgers, Jack?" demanded the outlaw in the first moment of their meeting.

"Two chaps from below—one a quiet, sober, silent sort of person; the other a fellow all tongue. His name's Horsey—ne's—"

"No matter. I know them both. As for Horsey, it's a misfortune he's along. He may be in the way. Hawkins put some nonsense in that fellow's head, and I fear has only thrust him in our path. The other must be seen to."

"Ha! What is he?"

"A spy, I reckon. Such is our suspicion. He's in with the governor, and they have had some talk about an ugly business which concerns us. The only good feature in the thing is, that they do not know exactly which way to turn themselves, or who to trust. What they know leads them to apprehend a great deal of which they know nothing, and much more than is the truth. What this youth knows is our question. We must touch his wallet. You must manage that to-night"

"Has he money, think you?"

"Nay, that is no object now; besides, I doubt he has little. He is a poor young lawyer that the governor has tempted with promises of a great reward for every beagle that he can collar. Our object is to get hold of his papers, and see what names he has down. We know that certain papers of Mat Webber fell into their hands at that ugly business on the Black Warrior; and the confessions of that traitor, Eberly, if he made any, might give them clues enough to our most secret operations. That this fellow, Vernon, is employed by the state, I have no sort of doubt; but there's no telling to what extent—what are the powers given him, or what is the object he aims at. These we must learn. His papers we must handle, and you must contrive it if you can to-night, or the work will be more troublesome to-morrow. Have you found out what course he takes?"

"To Beatie's Bluff, if he himself is to be believed; but the other lark told Betsy a different story, and said that they were both for the lower ford, on the route to Benton."

"And how's Bess now?—has she got over her humors? Does she still continue to suspect you?"

"Worse than ever; and Mabry is also very troublesome."

"But have you not given him your daughter—will not that stop his mouth?"

"It would, I make no doubt, could my giving be his having. But the old woman's stubborn as a mule, the girl herself dislikes him, and this evening there was a strange blow-out, that has made the chap furious as a wild beast—all tongue and wrath and no reason."

"Ha! what was the matter?"

"Well, you see, it so happened, that the old woman know'd this young man, Horsey, when he was only a little bit of a boy, somewhere down on Pearl river. Well, when they struck up the acquaintance between 'em, what should the fellow do, but, to make it fast, he ups and goes for kissing Mary, and for anything I know, the old woman too. Just at the time when he was about it, and pushing Mary, who was frightened enough, I warrant, all round the room, we came in, Mabry and myself; and before we could put in or say a word, Mabry jumps forward, and clips the stranger side of his head and tumbles him over like a log. There was a great to-do after that. The old

woman set all the water in the house a-boiling, and it got quite too hot for Ned. He started off and I followed him, and while we were talking together under the trees, who should come up but these two fellows. Horsey followed to get satisfaction for the blow, which, it was surprising to me, he took so lightly at first. He thought better of it afterward, however, and did better; for, I tell you, he handled poor Ned in two minutes in a way that's a caution. He downed him, a fair stupid down—Ned rolled about like a drunken bullock, and got mighty sick with both eyes shut up, and a great retching at his stomach. I had tight work to keep him steady on his nag and get him safely home. Since then, when he recovered, he's been in a mighty crooked humor. He swears that I don't want he should have the girl—that I'm only playing 'possum, and half believes that I set this fellow, Horsey, on to beat him, though nobody could have been more willing for the fight, at first, than Mabry himself."

"Does he threaten?"

"A little squinting that way, though he don't speak out plainly. But he'd threaten and tell too, if so be he thought I was only shamming in the business with Mary."

"You must run it through then, as fast as possible. He will scarcely speak anything to your discredit, if he was once married to your daughter."

"No! But that's the worry. The old woman's hot ag'in him. She thinks Mary meat for his master; and I do really believe she fancies to marry her to a colonel or some great lawyer, or maybe to a member of Congress. She always rides a high horse when she talks about Mary."

"But the girl herself?"

"Likes him no better than Bess. He stands but little chance with either of them."

"But if Bess approved, would not that help his chance with Mary?"

"Why, yes; but that's the swamp—worse than the Big Black—which I can't manage to cross nohow."

"Why not make Mabry a colonel? The thing might very easily be done. You can beat up and bring in stray votes enough to turn the election, if the fellow could do anything for

himself. We must manage this matter hereafter. For this other fellow, now —”

“Vernon?”

“Yes—of course, you know which bed he sleeps in. Did you give an eye to his portmanteau?”

“It’s in the room with him—I put it myself by the chimney. You don’t mean to—”

Yarbers paused, and looked vacantly in the other’s face leaving the sentence unfinished. Saxon smiled after a moment’s hesitation, and replied—

“You are afraid to have more work on your hands than was stipulated for. Be under no concern. We shall avoid blood-spilling and violence, as a general good policy, which is the more important to observe now when we are under partial suspicion already. All that we ask of you is to find out what he carries. You must get his papers; and this you can do, I trust, without difficulty. You have the old trap in the floor by which to enter, and this key will open any portmanteau-lock that was ever sold in Mississippi. As for his life, that is the least consideration so long as we know his game. There is more chance of Mabry growing troublesome than he, and you may yet find it necessary to work with cold steel upon him. Make him a colonel, and if that doesn’t bring Brown Bess to favor him, we must bribe him to good breeding in another way.”

“It’ll be hard work. I never seed a fellow that set such store on a ga’l in all my life. He can’t bear to see another man look upon her, and he talks of nothing else.”

“Unless it be of you; but his case needs no immediate attention. This of Vernon does. Did you note whether his saddle had pockets?”

“It has. I searched them already, but found nothing worth telling of. There was a newspaper, and some old accounts, I take it—they looked like bills and calculations.”

“You cared not what they looked like, Yarbers, when you found that they did not look like money. But I must see those papers. Where is the saddle?”

“In the stable. Shall I lead your horse round the old field? They may hear his footsteps if we take the path.”

“Right—do so. I’ll await you at the stall.”

Yarbers had put a tolerably fair estimate upon the papers found in the saddle-pouches. An examination of them by torchlight resulted in no discovery such as Saxon sought for, and the attempt to arrive at farther knowledge was devolved for the present upon the adroit and prying industry of Yarbers

CHAPTER XII.

TRAPS AND TOGGERY—THE RULING PASSION STRONG IN SLEEP
—A STAGE SITUATION.

“It is in mine authority to command
The keys of all the posterns: please your highness
To take the urgent here: come, sir, away.”

Winter's Tale.

BEFORE this long conference was ended, sleep had overcome the senses of Harry Vernon. The imagination which had so long kept him wakeful in spite of the day's fatigue, now busied itself only in his dreams, which were all of a kind natural to the young beginner on the weary paths of life. With a heart as yet unfettered, and a fancy free as that of the bird for the first time winging its way from the forests to the ocean, he was conscious only of that void and vacant region in his bosom, which is intended to be filled by love. The germ was there of the great empire over which the imperial master was yet to rear his wand, but the especial divinity had not bestowed a glance on the territory she was destined to inhabit. Warm and waiting for the advent, the heart of Harry Vernon did not yet repine in inconclusive fancies, hoping and sighing, and surrendering itself to imbecility. He suffered himself but little time to brood over the vague desires which he felt, but summoning to his side the thoughts which attend on duty, he addressed himself with ardor to the actual demands of existence, without yielding up more mind than was necessary to such as were eventual and prospective. It was only while he slept that his fancy gave itself up to the desires of his heart; and all

the struggles before his pathway were thrust from sight, and all his duties and dangers forgotten, to give place to as lovely a vision as youthful bard ever conceived and young imagination ever desired.

A maiden conjured up in realms of faery, rose before his dreaming eye—just such a form as met and realized the ideal which his united taste and reason might have been disposed to create at a moment of particular inspiration. She was tall and graceful; her skin pure as marble and smooth as ivory; her eyes black and streaming with a melting light; her lips soft as the leaf and richer than the rose; her cheeks pale but radiant, almost transparent with a light like that which glistened from her eyes; and her forehead lofty, spiritually narrow, and shaded by the voluminous masses of silk-like hair, darker than that which shines on the shoulders of the raven.

She stood beside him—such was his dreaming fancy—in a vision of his sleep. He had sunk for shelter beneath the shadows of a group of mighty oaks that surmounted the brow of a hill, and was surrounded by a dense and untrodden forest. His horse drank the while and cropped the herbage upon the banks of a little stream that wandered down the hillside, and lost itself in the deep groves of a thicket which hid from sight the dark and gloomy recesses of an inland swamp. The mid-day sun shone above him in melting fervor, but the dense foliage shielded him from the oppressive heat, and but a few straying straggling gleams, trembling and retreating as if conscious of intrusion, stole in at intervals between the branches, as they slowly yielded to the capricious wind. A dark shadow, as if from an overhanging cloud, suddenly overspread the scene the moment ere she entered upon it, but at her approach the cloud disappeared, a glory like that of the moon enveloped him with its soft, fleecy edges, and his very soul seemed to melt within him as the entrancing vision drew nigh to his side.

Other forms followed and crowded upon the scene—strange events and mingling action disturbed its quiet, and his eye toiled in the survey of a thousand features, each changing at his glance and distracting his attention. But the lovely form which had fixed his eye and fastened upon his soul at first, was still to be seen amidst the crowd—now here, now there, nigh

and then remote, but still present, hallowing the scene to softness, mollifying the strife, stilling the clamor, and subduing the turbulence, until—such was the strange fancy—the sudden obtrusion of Horsey, and his fierce declamation, affrighted the delicate and ethereal beauty from the spot; and he started from his sleep with a harsher mood in his bosom toward his self-appointed companion than any which he had ever entertained before. It will be seen how far the random actor was answerable for the dispersion of his happy fancies.

Horsey was not without his visions also; but they were of a very different character. When he first fell asleep, his nose performed such vigorous airs that Vernon was apprehensive lest they might greatly interfere with his own desired rest. But the mastery of this solemn member was disputed at frequent periods by his tongue; which, as if never needing rest, continued at intervals to pour forth choice fragments from his favorite Shakspeare, growling at one moment in all the emphatic terrors of the tragic muse; at another softening down to the most dulcet parts of love, the sweet significant nothings with which every hero regales his “Amaryllis in the shade.”

These were long or short as the occasion seemed to require them; and the prompt and well-versed memory of the actor appeared never to want the auxiliary help of a quotation. Sometimes, the sentences would be broken, sometimes complete; at first, they were usually short, consisting of two or three consecutive words of a single phrase; but Vernon, who listened to him for a while with smiling curiosity, observed, as the night advanced, that he rose from fragments to entire passages, and when he himself was sinking into that sleep which yielded him a vision so entrancing, he was conscious that the actor was gliding into the dialogue in which he personated the love-sick Montague, and wooed the fair Capulet beneath the window. Something Vernon caught ere he himself slept, of—

“—— strides the lazy pacing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air,”

followed by an intense ebullition of the nostrils which probably answered all the purposes of a reply from Juliet; when he himself, surrendering to the oppressive sleep, lost all farther apprehension of the dialogue.

But it was continued, nevertheless, by the actor, though so large a portion of his audience slept; and, perhaps, the interruptions from his nose allowed for, he never went through the part with more honest unction in his life. That he might have done better, or at least toiled for it, is unquestionable, if he could only have been told that at this moment his audience was increased.

So it was. Saxon, the outlaw, and his adjunct Yarbers, stood without the dwelling and beside the chimney of the shed-room in which slept the travellers. Their ears took in with readiness the earnest and pleading devotions of the amorous Romeo, and so greatly did the affair tend to the amusement of the former, that he could with difficulty restrain himself from taking the opposite part of the dialogue, and thus stimulating the enthusiastic actor to increased efforts. But the more timid Yarbers was opposed to this, and, speaking in whispers, scarcely audible to his immediate companion, dwelt earnestly on the danger of discovery.

“Pshaw, John Yarbers, the man sleeps—soundly too—no man sleeps more soundly than him who dreams of what he loves.”

“But the other fellow—Vernon!”

“Ay—you have need of caution there; but I reckon he sleeps too. You must lift the trap cautiously and listen, before you do anything.”

This trap was simply a square hole in the floor, made by sawing two of the flooring-boards across, fastening them together by a cross-piece below, and securing them with common hooks to the joist beneath. While, therefore, their ends rested upon the joists, they resisted any pressure from above, and it was easy for one under the house, by undoing the hooks, to raise the trap and make his way into it. The fabric stood upon raised blocks, from three to four feet from the ground, and, obeying the direction of the outlaw, Yarbers fell upon his knees, and soon disappeared beneath it.

It was easy to undo the hooks which secured the door, but the continued declamation of Horsey, in spite of all the assurances of Saxon that he slept, disturbed the nerves of the intruder, and he once more returned to the entrance to assure

his companion that it was certainly Vernon who snored and Horsey who spoke; and that the speaking had none of the obstructions or hesitation of a sleeping man, and came most certainly from the throat of one as perfectly conscious as he ever was in daylight. The impatient outlaw answered him with an oath.

"Yarbers, you are but a dry bone after all. Stand aside, and let me do it."

"Stay, sir—don't you hear steps? Don't you think he's walking?"

"Pshaw, man! It's your own heart. It thumps hard enough to scare you, I doubt not. Where does the portmanteau stand?"

"Right side of the chimney from the hall-door; and the saddle-bags on the left."

"But which is Vernon's?"

"Fegs! I don't know. I warn't home when they come, and I s'pose they took 'em off the creatures themselves and brought 'em in. There's no telling which is which."

"That's unfortunate. We must then examine both," said Saxon, as he crawled under the house and made his way to the still unopened trap-door. This he raised with sufficient care, though not without some little noise—the hard, heavy pine, of which the boards were made, requiring that degree of effort in raising them which had been otherwise necessary to keep them in equilibrium and prevent the edges from grazing against the surrounding floor, to which they were made to correspond with tolerable nicety. Once lifted, the intruder, still grasping the door in his hand, raised himself and stood up within the opening, his head and shoulders being now within the apartment. The door he laid down gently upon the floor beside the trap, so that it might be drawn into its place on the first alarm.

To his confusion, however, while thus engaged, he discovered that the conjecture of Yarbers was not unfounded. Horsey was certainly out of bed, and striding the floor of the apartment. His ruling passion had grown utterly ungovernable in his sleep, and the somnambulist was now fairly in the highest realm of hallucination. His movements were, however, slow enough at this period; and Saxon succeeded, without noise or interruption, in stretching forth his hand to the fireplace and securing

the saddle-bags, which were the first that came within his reach. These he handed through the aperture to his comrade below, who proceeded to examine them in the moonlight without. His whispered words, as he looked at the contents, declared his own wonder, while they satisfied Saxon that he had fallen upon the wrong chattels.

"Jackets and breeches all covered with gold and spangles."

"Stuff 'em back," said Saxon, stooping down, and whispering; "stuff 'em back and hand me the bags. They are the actor's baggage. We must grope for the other's."

While this was doing, and at the moment when Saxon had received them in his hands, and was about raising them through the hole in which he stood, in order to replace them, the paroxysm came upon Romeo stronger and less controllable than ever. A rush of inspiration filled his veins, and to the great annoyance of the outlaw, he heard him growling and advancing. The play had made rapid progress in the sleep of the actor. He had reached the fifth act—he had got his poison from the apothecary—he had resolved upon his own death, and was hurrying on to give County Paris his.

"Give me that mattock!" he cried in low, hoarse accents to the supposed Balthazar beside him. His voice then subsided into a throng of pressing whispers, as if forced to speak, yet not desiring to be heard. This brought him within a few paces of the outlaw, who began seriously to feel the inconvenience of his situation. A few strides more would bring the actor upon his shoulders, and into the pit. To withdraw and let down the door at that moment, might be to arouse the sleeper, and defeat the object which he had in view; and no possible effort which he could make, short of rushing into the room itself, would enable him—this he discovered—to reach the opposite end of the fireplace where the valise of Vernon had been placed.

While he stood in a state of incertitude, which prevented him from doing anything, the passion of the actor had taken a new direction from the approach of Paris. He had gone through the paroxysms which made him beat down the gate of the monument; and here Saxon observed, with some surprise, that he now spoke the part of Paris as well as his own, to which, hitherto, he had entirely confined himself. The inference of

the outlaw from this fact, was, that the pressure of sleep was passing off, the influence of imagination lessened, and that the actor's ear needed the absolute reality of sound, to continue any longer in his self-deception.

This added somewhat to the apprehensions of the intruder, who was not suffered very long to speculate upon the matter. The language of Paris was threatening—that of Romeo had assumed a tone of mildness, which, in reality, only disguised the laboring volcano in his bosom:—

“‘I beseech thee, youth,
Pull not another sin upon my head,
By urging me to fury.’”

Still he approaches, and his arm rises as if balancing the sword.

“Live,” he says, in most soliciting tones—

“‘Live, and hereafter say,
A madman's mercy bade thee run—away.’”

Here he availed himself of one of his own readings of the thousand unimportant distinctions in such matters, of which stage-struck citizens are so apt to make a fuss. Pausing at the word “run,” which he had spoken along with the whole passage in the gentlest accents, he now made a tremendous transition, and the final word, “away,” was thundered forth in tones to waken up the dead. This was a “point” upon which, in his waking moments, he was very apt to pride himself. The answer of Paris, which he also spoke, fell something short of this, but was still loud; and he had scarcely given himself time to finish it, before, reaching the acme of his paroxysm in the part of Romeo, he gave the torrent free vent, and leaped upon the shoulders of Saxon, while he cried aloud—

“‘Wilt thou provoke me?—then have at thee, boy!’”

The situation was awkward in the last degree, and the struggles of Romeo were such as to convince the outlaw that he was rapidly coming to his senses. Exerting his whole strength, therefore, he seized the half-prostrate actor by his shoulders, and flung him from him as far as he might while in the place in which he stood, not giving much heed whether the poor fellow was brought up by flint or feathers. Then, suddenly sink

ing down with equal promptness and composure, he drew the trap into its place with a degree of ease which added but little to the bustle which the previous incident had occasioned.

The direction given to Horsey by the arms of Saxon, carried him upon the couch of Vernon, whom the struggling actor, now emerging into actual bodily consciousness, grappled with as he was rising up in alarm, and continued to contend with as if County Paris still remained to be slain.

But he met with no better treatment at the hands of Vernon than from those of Saxon, being tumbled, by a very unscrupulous movement, backward upon the floor, where he lay, for a moment, actually at a loss to determine where he was and what was his condition.

Vernon had been as roughly awakened from a pleasant dream as the actor, and, still in doubt as to whence the annoyance arose, he was soon out of bed and standing above Romeo, the moment he had flung him from him. What might have been his farther act had not Horsey spoken, though doubtful in character, would have been certainly decisive. The tongue of the latter, never for any length of time idle, happily resumed its offices in time to prevent more mischief.

"Why, Harry, my dear boy, is that you? Why, what the devil's the matter?"

"Matter, Mr. Horsey. That's the very question to be asked of you. How came you on my bed?"

"Your bed! Was that your bed, Harry? By all that's sacred in stage-lights, I took it for the tomb of Juliet; and Paris—you were Paris, my dear fellow."

"Do you walk in your sleep, Mr. Horsey?" asked Vernon, now beginning to conjecture the whole affair.

"Egad, it may be. I don't know, but, certainly, I have had a strangely exciting dream. It was our first night at Benton, Harry. I was Romeo, and that dear little Mary made her début in Juliet, under my instructions. If I ever play so well in reality, as I fancied I played this night—as I must have played in my sleep—I shall ask for nothing better. But," rising from the floor as he spoke, "my shin is cursedly bruised—the skin's off; I can hardly get up. I had some notion that I had got into a hole, but—"

The voice of Mrs. Yarbers at the chamber-door, demanding to know if anybody was sick, and asking the cause of the uproar, silenced the actor. After satisfying her, he was very glad to slink back into bed, as he found Vernon unwilling any longer to listen to his description of the scene, and the detail of points newly-made, which had broken in upon fancies of his own no less dear and exciting, though, possibly—it was his own reflection—not more real and stable than those of his companion.

Saxon was no less annoyed, and, perhaps, with more serious cause for annoyance, than those within. He waited long without the house, and near his place of secret ingress, in the hope of hearing those sounds from the sleepers which should assure him of an uninterrupted entrance. But he waited in vain.

Whether it was that the rough handling which Horsey had received had utterly expelled the nightmare, or whether he had become conscious of the unreasonableness of making any more disturbance in the house, and was willing to compensate for his excesses at one moment by an unusual degree of forbearance at another, he certainly did not snore again that night. Vernon's was a well-bred nose, that seldom violated the rules of decorum; and hopeless of the plan, the progress of which had been so forcibly interrupted in the first instance, the outlaw concluded to defer to another opportunity his intended purpose.

"We must do it on the roadside; and it may be necessary that we should even lay hands on him. These papers being of value he would most probably conceal them about his person. It is barely possible that they should be in the valise, and we should take no such risks as this on the strength of a bare possibility. We must keep your house in the reputation of being an honest one, Yarbers, as well to serve our purposes as to please your wife. Let her not know that I have been here to-night. I will go farther up, and be ready for our man at the fork."

"She'll guess fast enough though I don't tell her. She's mighty 'cute, and knows the bay of the beagle is not for nothing in these parts."

"So long as she can't see the beagle, and don't know whose name's on the collar, she knows nothing. But help me to my

horse, while I ride. Jones will be here by daylight, I suppose. You can send him after me when he comes."

"And Mabry?"

"If he blab, he must be silenced. If the mouth won't be sugared, it must be stopped. You will see him to-morrow when he is a little cooled off from the drubbing of this actor, and persuade him that you have nothing to do in the business. This he will be the more apt to believe when he finds his enemy gone; and, perhaps, it might be just as well that you should see him at an early hour on the subject. Should nothing answer—should he grow troublesome—I will send a decoy-beagle, who will get him into Cane Castle, where he'll leave all his secrets before he comes forth."

"There was one here for you to-day from Cane Castle—Stillyards."

"The hunchback! well, what said he?"

"He came from Monna."

"Ah! she's impatient; but she must wait. She would fetter me, Yarbers, as Brown Bess fetters you, but that my blood is quite as quick and impatient as her own. Yet, she's a woman more to be feared than Bess. She can't scold so well—nay, she seldom scolds; but she thinks and broods over her thoughts, which are sometimes fearful enough, and one day she may seek to act them. She's secret, Yarbers; and there she is unlike Bess, who would blab everything she knew to your hurt, if you once put her into a passion. Monna, if sometimes fearful as the grave, is at all times as secret. It would be twenty times our good, Yarbers, were your wife half as secret. But you took her for better or worse, and so must we. If you are satisfied with your bargain," speaking with a malicious smile, "your friends have no reason to complain."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RENTS IN "ROMEO"—BURNING ONE'S FINGERS—SPLENDID
ANTICIPATIONS.

"The confidence of youth our only art,
And Hope gay pilot of the bold design,
We saw the living landscapes
Reach after reach salute us and depart."

WORDSWORTH.

THE travellers prepared to set forth at an early hour on the ensuing morning. The adventures of the night had tended somewhat to sour the usually sweet temper of the actor. His legs, which he displayed to the wonder and commiseration of his companion, were skinned from knee to ankle, in a way perfectly mysterious to the sufferer, who could not conceive how such an affliction could have arisen simply from his playing Romeo to empty boxes.

"And yet it seemed to me, among other things, that it wasn't Romeo, neither, but Hamlet. I was in the grave, grappling—I'll be sworn upon it—with Laertes, with whom I 'fought a long hour by Shrewsbury clock.' It must have been in the grave that I got these bruises."

That imperfect state of mind which, in dreams, so happily unites the fanciful with the actual, had, in fact, produced a rapid transition in his thoughts from the one play to the other, while his involuntary struggle in the hole with the outlaw suggested a similitude of circumstances so favorable for a change of scene; and the dawning of his right reason, which the struggle necessarily occasioned, forced upon him the partial conviction that some other man, of considerable brawn and muscle, had, like himself, been dreaming a part also, which had given the performance a termination so perfectly tragical. His inspection of his saddle-bags contributed in some little degree to his confusion. The contents were in strange disorder.

"Could I have been so d—d stupid as to have dressed myself in costume? I don't recollect putting it back, and if I did, I must have shown a singular indifference to Romeo's wardrobe to have put it up without folding. Look here, Harry Vernon, what a bunch I've made of it in my sleep; a bag from a beggar's press—and the garment perfectly new—a splendid garment, for which that skunk of a tailor amerced me in a greater number of dad's dollars than I should be altogether willing to count up in his hearing. You shall see me put it on. You shall—you shall form an idea of the sort of chap that Caldwell quarrelled with; you shall see the figure, at least, of a Romeo not to be met with every day."

This scene was going on in the chamber prior to their appearance before the family in the hall. They had been already summoned to an early breakfast, which Vernon, before retiring for the night, had especially solicited. He now ventured to remind the actor that the family and breakfast waited upon them.

"Only a moment!" exclaimed the actor hurriedly, as he proceeded to envelope himself in the glittering garment of the amorous Montague—"only for a moment! It's worth a glance from a veteran stager. Ha! what's this?—a hole! a rent!"

The exclamation of the actor, distinguished by tones expressive not merely of surprise, but consternation and horror, drew the attention of Vernon to the dress, in which an envious nail—probably while old Yarbers was inspecting the glittering sack beneath the house—had torn a finger's breadth.

"What the d—l shall I do?—what a misfortune!" exclaimed the actor, with a degree of concern infinitely greater than any that his bruised shins had occasioned.

"It's but a small hole; it's easily mended," said Vernon.

"Small!" exclaimed the actor, with some indignation. "Ay, ay, not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but 'tis enough to call for the instant succor of a darning needle. Juliet, that is to say, my little Mary, here, shall take it up off hand. She's a nice, handy body, that; would make, with training, an admirable Juliet—gad, 'twould be a charity to give her lessons, and I'll think of it. But to the Romeo—she shall take up the rent in the twinkling of an eye."

"Surely, Mr. Horsey, you will not delay us for so small a matter."

"Small a matter, indeed! By St. David's best buckles. Harry, you have a strangely irreverent way about you! Such a rent in Romeo's body is no small matter. Let the audience see a hole in a hero's breeches, and d—me if it don't turn all his tragedy into farce. I once saw a chap named Barnes playing *Lear*, with his shirt—an ugly corner of it, I mean—depending, for all the world like a streamer, fully a quarter of a yard from his inexpressibles. The audience roared with admiration, which Barnes took for applause. Never did a fellow play so furiously fine—with so much earnestness and enthusiasm. But the more fire he put into his acting, the more it filled them with laughter; all of which he mistook, like an ass as he was, for pleasure at his performance. On a sudden, however, he happened to fling his left hand behind him in order to adjust his sword, and he grasped along with it the obtrusive garment. You never saw a fellow's comb cut so short off. He lost his voice in an instant—his head dropped, and when he came round to the wing, the sweat stood upon his brow like treacle. No, no! I am clear that no man should make his bow to the public with a hole in his breeches."

Vernon expostulated against the delay, but in vain. A new measure suggested itself to his companion.

"While her hand's in at one thing, she can do the other, or I'll do it myself. I'll get Mary to heat me an iron, and I'll smooth it before I start. It's ruined for ever if I put it back in this condition."

Vernon saw that expostulation and entreaty were alike vain. Horsey made a point of healing Romeo's hurts—the ruling passion rendering him equally obstinate to argument and entreaty; and with a complacency as enviable in the eye of a traveller as it is desirable in that of an actor, he sallied from his chamber with the fractured garment in his hand, and proceeded instantly and without circumlocution, to declare his requisitions to mother and daughter.

"Get your needle, my little Juliet, and show me what sort of a workman you are; but first put me an iron to warm; I must take out these wrinkles."

The girl willingly assumed the performance of task set her, and Horsey sat down the while to breakfast, but his eyes were upon her as she sewed, and more than once he started up to look at her progress.

"Well enough done, Mary. You are the girl after my own heart. Egad, if my wardrobe suffers much more injury in this fashion, I shall not be able to do without you. I shall have to come and steal you from mamma. A stitch or two more just there, Mary, if you please; and now that I look at it, just beneath the arm I see that a thread has dropped. The garment is rather tight over the shoulders, and it is only a timely precaution that would guard against the strain of any great action in that quarter. A man's blood gets up wondrously, Harry, when he's in the fury of a fifth act—when he's warmed by opposition, and, more than all, by his own rising consciousness of what is called for by the character. At such a time his action increases accordingly, and it would be the most awkward thing in the world, if, extending his arm to convey the idea of command, to order Buckingham's head off, or any matter of equal tragic signification, he should discover to the inquisitive audience a rent under the arm, and a glimmer of a white cotton shirt beneath his buckram. It's the easiest thing in the world to upset the gravity of an audience in the deepest scenes. One fool makes many, and the first booby that laughs out, without any fear of shame, finds a hundred followers. I've seen it a thousand times, and know there is nothing so tragic as will frighten farce. Farce follows tragedy as naturally as the sparks fly upward. She stands beside her, ready to grin at the first opening; and let dignity forget herself for an instant, she claps her hands, and darts in, without any regard to decency, before all the spectators."

Thus rambling on, the actor ate his breakfast, and watched the progress of Mary with her needle. The bright eyes of the girl laughed the while, and her cheeks blushed, when he hung over her; his glances being equally shared between the sempstress and the garment. The breakfast over, Vernon, with some consternation, beheld him proceeding to assist the mother and daughter in removing the plates and dishes, in order to convert the table into a tailor's board, on which he could perform the last-needed office of smoothing out the rumpled Romeo. Old

Yarbers looked on with a scarcely-suppressed smile, which was not lessened as the actor confessed to having disordered his wardrobe in his *night-errant* habits. *He* could have told a truer story, and have accounted more truly, if not more rationally, for the condition of the saddle-bags. But he was prudent enough to conceal his knowledge, and suppress, though with difficulty, his laughter.

The actor had made a clean breast, and declared the true cause of the uproar of last night to the family. There was nothing retentive in his nature, unless it might be in the one purpose of his mood; and, prattling ever, like the downward running fountain, his streams, the deeps and shallows alike, were equally open to the sunlight.

Harry Vernon, meanwhile, became impatient to the last degree. Not that he had any reason to wait for Horsey, beyond that of mere civility. He well knew that, before the day was out, they would reach the spot where diverging roads should prove convincingly to the actor that his course was other than that which he had so precipitately and erroneously assumed to be the same with his own. To hurry off before his companion was ready, in order that he might anticipate this truth, would at least seem rude, if it were not so in reality; and then the utter simplicity and good nature of the actor pleaded in his behalf, and made Vernon, who was generously and nobly constituted, reluctant to do anything which might inflict unnecessary pain, even though he well knew that a nature so mercurial as that of Horsey would not feel it long. Resolved, therefore, to await the actor's pleasure, he sat resigned to his fate, and beheld him removing the hominy, the remnants of the bacon and eggs—the mother, father, and daughter, equally, and in vain, striving to prevent him from performing duties so seemingly inconsistent with the dignity of a gentleman and the position of a guest. But his activity set their exertions at defiance. Plate followed plate, and dish dish, and cup cup, without stop or stay, until, striving to sweep up in one common effort the remaining odds and ends, he grappled them quite too unceremoniously together, and, to his own horror, and the great reddening of the hostess's cheeks, they came in undistinguishable ruin to the ground.

"Bless my soul, Mrs. Yarbers, but what have I done? I have broken all your cups and saucers."

"No! never mind, Mr. Horsey," stammered the old lady, half-angry with her old favorite, yet doing her utmost to conceal her annoyance.

"It's very unfortunate. I certainly had 'em fast, my dear madam. I could carry twice as many. I'll show you now, I'll bring back, in two turns, all that I have carried to the shelf;" and he actually proceeded to restore the plates and dishes to the table—"and if I break so much as a teacup, I'll give my head for a football. It was certainly the strangest misfortune."

Vernon interposed—

"Certainly it was, Mr. Horsey—a sort of fatality which can no more be accounted for than helped. All that you can do is to send Mrs. Yarbers a fine set from Vicksburg or Natchez, and take care to meddle with no more cups and saucers. The table is ready for you now—why not smooth the garment?"

"True, true, my cousin of Vernon, that is a good thought; and Bess—hold me your debtor for a set of china, the best that money can get in Natchez. Nay, nay, I will have no refusal—it must be so. You shall have the cups and saucers; I swear it by my Romeo, which stands waiting for smoothing. Let me have the iron, Mary nay, don't burn your pretty fingers with it—let me have it."

"It's hot, Mr. Horsey. Better take it up with the towel, sir," said the girl. But the rapid actor had already grasped the iron at the fire, with a rapidity only exceeded by the haste with which he dropped it again; and he now stood blowing his fingers, his face red as a lobster's with the sudden pain, and his mouth puffing and speaking alternately.

"Hot as—phew! phew!—the skin's off fingers as well as legs. Phew! Harry, my dear fellow, what an accident! Ay, do, Mary, that's a dear girl—do you iron it for me. Let your iron lie smoothly, Mary, my dear, and take care that it doesn't scorch Romeo as it has scorched me. That blue is very perishable—phew!—the misfortune of all things that are very beautiful. There, there—I think that will do. It must do. I won't worry you to work for me any longer, my sweet Juliet. Mrs. Yarbers, why didn't you call your daughter Juliet, instead of Mary?"

“As well might Mrs. Yarbers ask why you were not called Romeo, instead of Tom, Mr. Horsey. The one question might be answered just as readily as the other. But time presses on me, if not on you; and if you are disposed to stop until you have revised all the Christian names in the county, there is certainly no good reason why I should linger to assist you.”

“Right, Harry; there’s right and reason in what you say. Mrs. Yarbers, the best friends must part—you shall hear of me soon, and see me again when I have got through my business above. Mary, my dear, you shall be my Juliet—nay, don’t look down; I tell you it shall be so. There shall go an oath to it that shall bind one of us, at least; and unless Mr. Mabry steps between us both—ha! so you turn away—you do not like that—well, I like you the better that you do not; and so good-by. ‘It is a grief to part’ so brief with thee. Come, Harry Vernon, I am ready now.”

The actor had prolonged the parting words and moments to the last possible limits, and somewhat to the surprise of Vernon, he saw, or fancied he saw, an expression of seriousness and interest, rather beyond that of his ordinary manner, conspicuous in what he said and looked to the lovely forest damsel. Nor, on the other hand, did it seem to Vernon that the girl was entirely without some consciousness of the interest which she occasioned, and that which she felt, for her little rosy lips quivered as she spoke to them at parting, and the “good-by” trembled in imperfect expression upon her scarcely-opened mouth. Mrs. Yarbers was pleased to assure both the travellers that nothing would gladden her more than to see them often; a compliment which she then repeated to Horsey in particular; and one, in approbation of which, her lord and master growled out certain confirmatory, but scarcely intelligible sentences.

For a brief space after their departure from the hovel, the spirits of Horsey seemed considerably depressed. He said but little, and that little with the air of a man who speaks rather to avoid the imputation of sullenness, than with any desire to please. When he did speak more freely, and with the gradual assumption of his former mood, his expressions revealed the true source of his solemnity.

“There is something monstrous uncomfortable at parting,

Harry, even with acquaintances of yesterday. I don't get over it for an hour or two. It seems to me like rooting me up, and tearing off some of my leaves and branches, when I am compelled to grapple hands only to cast them loose again. It's true it don't make me sick—for that matter, I shouldn't go to bed, I believe, or lose stomach for a dinner, if I was to be separated for ever from the best friends in the world. I should only, if that were the case, take a pine torch in my fingers, and go about looking after others; and a newer set might soon console me for the lost. But it seems to weigh me down; my limbs grow weakish, and I lose all desire to make any exertions and scarcely care to say or hear anything, though the best passage offered itself for quotation jump to the moment, from Billy Shakspeare, that high treasurer of all manner of spoken jewels. Now I feel just so in leaving these good people. It's true Brown Bess is an old crony. I know nothing about her husband, who seems but a curmudgeon; but that dear little creature—that Mary—don't you think her devilish handsome, Harry? What a forehead she has! what lips, eyes, hair! A very collection of beauties! Celia, Rosalind, and Helen, melted into one; and yet, Harry, she did not speak twenty words to me the whole time she was present."

"How could she—who can, Mr. Horsey?" replied Vernon, laughing, "you out-talked the whole family."

"The lawyer, also. By my faith, Harry, but that I heard you made a long and good speech at Raymond, I should be inclined to say you had taken up the wrong profession. Now I should have been the lawyer."

"You mistake. You would soon ruin yourself as a lawyer. You would soon talk yourself away. A lawyer's words are the materials he works with—you would soon dull them, or wear them out. Your talking lawyer is a profligate who cheapens his own wares by making them common. To talk in the right place is his art, no less than to talk to the purpose. The where, and the when, and the how much, are the three grand requisites of public speaking."

"Egad, if that be the case, Harry, I should be soon swallowed up; for, as to stopping to think when I should speak and what I should say, that would seem to be the most idle, as it would

certainly be, in my case, the most impracticable thing in the world. For that matter, I don't know half the time that I'm talking, even when my tongue is most busy 'beating all the chimes of Westminster.' I catch myself, every now and then, speechifying of my own head, or giving a reading from Shakspeare to pine trees and gray mosses, wasting myself, as the rose does its sweetness, upon the desert air, when I can get no better audience. Such, I trust, will not be our fate at Benton, however, if Tilton has any skill in management, and the Yazooians any taste. By the splinters, you shall see how I shall drive; nay, there's no good reason why I should not give you a sample now. Here's a quiet spot—looks for all the world as if it was meant for such a purpose. There is a space on the brow of the hill which would accommodate a thousand people, and the pines rise, and the oaks spread above and around it, and the vines link them together and fill up the space between; so that the amphitheatre of the Romans was never so compact, and not half so well covered. And, in the woods, with green leaves around me, my voice seems to have a volume and a clearness that I can not always command in a building. Ride up with me for a minute and you shall see as good an imitation of Forrest—did you ever meet with Forrest, Harry? A splendid, half-savage-looking fellow—a sort of Mark Antony before dinner—who, by the way, would make a figure in Dryden's Antony, perhaps superior to any who has yet tried it. But I will show you Forrest in Damon—you shall have the strangling scene—I'll choke a pine sapling for Lucullus—I'll—"

He commenced riding up the hill as he spoke, but Vernon stopped him.

"I ride on, Mr. Horsey. I would not now stop to see Forrest himself."

"The d—l you wouldn't."

"No, on my soul I wouldn't."

The actor stared.

"Harry Vernon, you are a bundle of mysteries. How can it be that you love the stage?—nay, how can you yourself play with any hope of success unless you are willing to behold the best models?"

"Your remark reminds me of the error under which you have

labored so long and under which you still labor;" was the reply of Vernon expressed in looks equally grave with his language. "I will not ask, Mr. Horsey, by what means, or by whom, you became possessed of the idea that I entertained a passion for the stage and had resolved to go upon it. It is enough that such is your delusion, entertained in spite of my earnest and repeated assurances that such was not my intention—that I had no such passion, and that I was already earnestly and irrevocably bound to the pursuit of another profession—one of the most jealous as the most absorbing—which will suffer neither rival nor interruption. With a most unbecoming resoluteness you refused credence to my own assurances to this effect, and have appointed yourself my travelling companion, without knowing how far I desired company, or whether your presence might not somewhat interfere with the object of my pursuit. It has not been through your forbearance, Mr. Horsey, that it has not done so, and I trust you will believe me when I tell you that it has been with me a serious fear that such might be its effect. Finding you possessed with this strange notion, and having exhausted all my forms of speech in seeking to convince you that I was no actor, and did not intend to become one, I forebore—in consideration of your parents, who have treated me so kindly, and with some reference to yourself, for I am not blind to your good qualities and natural parts—farther expostulation and complaint, and was contented that you should remain in your error for a while, satisfied that it would not be very long before you would be disabused of it. That time is now at hand; a few miles farther will bring us to the forks, and you will then find that I will certainly take the upper road for Beattie's Bluff, while you, if your aim be Benton, will as certainly take that which crosses the river below. It only remains that I should again assure you, with all the solemnity of an oath, though I make none, that I am by profession a lawyer, that I have never dreamed of any other, and do not know, and have never thought to inquire, whether I have the most partial qualification for the stage. I admire good acting, am not deficient in a knowledge of the best dramatists, can quote Shakspeare almost as frequently, if not so felicitously as yourself, and, at another time than this—with less care upon my mind.

and less business upon my hands—I should be particularly pleased to hear you in any, and all, of your favorite parts. Believe me, Mr. Horsey, from what I have already seen, I am prepared to believe that it is in your power, with study, industry, and *humility*, to rise to considerable distinction in your art.”

“Say you so, Harry? Then I forgive you all the rest. I forgive you all that d—d dignity that makes me feel all over as if Carter himself had caught me playing tricks with my neighbors’ sign-boards, and was scoring me hip and thigh with a most thorny morality. But, Harry, do you really think from what you have seen that I should become a proper actor?”

“I do, really, Mr. Horsey.”

“That is to say with study and industry. But what do you mean by humility? I don’t see any necessity for humility. Indeed, that’s the last matter that a modern actor esteems as a requisite.”

“The most necessary of all; for without humility one learns nothing. He will neither see in what he is himself defective, nor in what consists his rival’s superiority. He can learn nothing who believes there is little left him to learn, and he alone learns all that man can teach, who is humble enough to doubt his own possessions, and hopeful enough to labor for their increase. I should have high hopes of you, Mr. Horsey, could you bring yourself to this conviction.”

“God bless you, my dear fellow, these are devilish kind words of yours. Devilish kind! I’m d—nably unused to them. I’ve heard nothing all my life but censure; sneer and censure. Managers, and actors, and audience—no, d—me, I won’t say anything about the audience—they have always treated me well enough whenever I had fair play before them—but, by my soul, I can’t say the same for my brother actors, and still less favorably can I speak of managers. Had I believed them, I should have cut my throat, or turned in as a wagoner, or taken to some other villanous handicraft which only suffers a man to know that he is alive at meal-time. They have denied all my hopes and decried all my talents; and then came doubts to my mind—doubts, dark, dirty, earth-whelming, miserable doubts, Mr. Vernon—that made my soul sick, and

made me feel as if I could steal away into some dark corner of the woods and die; satisfied, if out of human sight, that they spoke nothing but the truth—that I had deceived myself—that, in short, I had none of that genius, the fires of which I fancied to be blazing away proudly and inextinguishably in soul and brain. Oh, Harry Vernon, these were killing, crushing doubts;—and when they came to me, as they always did when I was out of money, and the d—d tailors and tavern-keepers at my heels, I felt all over as the meanest of all possible beings. But you cheer me; your words—for I believe you, Harry, to be a d—d smart fellow—your words reassure me. I feel my courage rise; I feel the fire blazing up within me, and by all that's resolute in man, it shall blaze out, ere many days, to the satisfaction of others. But, though you give me life, Harry, curse me but you crush me again when you tell me you are not one of us. I can hardly believe you even now. I heard it so solemnly asserted, and, indeed, lost and paid a bet on the matter."

"Something strange, at least, in all this business," said Vernon, curiously. "Pray where did you hear this story?"

"In Raymond, while you were talking in the courthouse."

"My talking in the courthouse, alone, should have sufficed to prove my profession."

"Yes, it would; and it did, at first; but there was a d—d plausible story told me about the matter, which made me throw it all up as so much gammon."

"And who took so much interest in me, and so much pains to lead you astray in this matter, Mr. Horsey? Can you remember?"

The actor, without hesitation, gave full details of the conference with Hawkins and Saxon in the village of Raymond, narrated such portions of the dialogue as had special reference to theatricals and his companion's probable connection with them, and from the succinctness of his statements, and the clearness with which he repeated the several parts taken by the two, he soon convinced Vernon that there must have been a sinister purpose in the minds of the men who made such seemingly gratuitous misstatements. The name of Hawkins strengthened this conviction

"Hawkins! Hawkins! That was the name of the man whom the governor arrested."

"The same," replied Horsey. "He's a strange sort of suspicious chap. Everybody thinks there's something wrong about him; but they can't tell what. He gambles, they all know; but he's so cunning, they can find nothing worse against him; though I've no doubt they're right in thinking him a great rascal."

"Indeed! and can it be that you value your character so little as to consort with a fellow whom you think a rascal?"

"Ah, Harry, there you have me. But, truth to speak, a poor devil like myself whom one set snarls at, and the other laughs at, is devilish well satisfied to get a companion who will do neither, without being particularly anxious to know whether he's as good a man as he should be, or even as he appears. Besides, let me tell you, Hawkins is a smart fellow. He has Shakspeare at his fingers' ends, and I've seen him throw that into his face, while he's been going through a part of Iago, which would send a shiver through pit and gallery at a glance."

"Enough; these men have lied to you, Mr. Horsey, at least so far as I have been concerned. They have, I gather from your account of it, used you as a spy upon me."

"The devil you say?"

"Think over the matter yourself, my friend, and you can not escape this conviction. They have flattered your ruling passion, and have gleaned from you all the knowledge of me and my movements which might have been in your possession. Fortunately, you knew nothing, and could reveal nothing, nothing at least of very serious importance. Whether anything worse will grow out of it than this wild-goose chase upon which they have sent you, it is impossible now to say. It will be important, however, that we should both be cautious in our future progress."

"Spoken like a book, Harry. But why the d—l should these fellows want to know your movements—heh? So you *have* secrets, Harry—there is a mystery—there—"

"Professional and personal, purely, Mr. Horsey, and when I tell you this much, I trust, I secure myself against further inquiry. To convince you, however, that I regard you with in-

terest and favor, I make free to counsel you to return to your friends and family. I do not believe this story of theatrical establishments at Benton and other places. The country is unfit for, and unable to support them. A circus, now, would be more reasonable; a place for ground and lofty tumbling; but, seriously, I look upon the dramatic art as utterly foreign to such regions as the Yazoo. There is, as yet no settled population. The country is uncleared, and thoroughly wild; settled by squatters chiefly—without means, tastes, education, or sensibility; rude, rough people; a people peculiarly fitted for the conquest of savages and savage lands, but utterly incapable of appreciating an art so exquisite and intellectual as that of the legitimate drama. Go back, and if it be your resolute determination to seek for fame in the prosecution of your present purpose—which I would not counsel—seek it, then, where only it is to be found. Go to the large cities—go to the largest. Where the ability exists to pay best, there will always the best talent assemble—there will the true standards of critical judgment be formed and rival powers will soon reduce each other to their just level, until which there can be no certain reputation. There is something very puny in the judgment of small communities; and something very contemptible in being a little lion in a little plain. Go to the ring where all the challengers assemble, and strike the shield of the most insolent and bold. When you have done this, you will find your level, and what is of more importance to you still, you will have justly arrived at a knowledge of your own strength. Till then, you walk in vapor, and the stars which shine above you are far or near, according to the wind and the weather, your own caprice of mood, or the caprice of feeling and judgment of those with whom you mingle. Understand me, Mr. Horsey, I do not counsel you by what I have said, to pursue the stage. Far from it. I believe the glories of the profession to be very uncertain, and its golden rewards, half the time, to be visionary; besides, it is attended by a thousand defeats and humiliations which are gall and wormwood to the independent spirit. On this head, you know best what you will do, and to your calm, common sense reflection, I am willing to leave it. But if you are resolved to be an actor, then it is my advice that you break

ground where the audience is large, and where the competitors are many; where you will be compelled to take pains to preserve rank and respectability, and where no petty management or petty clique can prevent your efforts, or do injustice to your performance. Go to the great city, if you must act, and throw yourself upon the waters. Remember the noble chorus in your own favorite play:—

“ ‘A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene,
Then should the warlike Harry, *like himself*,
Assume the port of Mars—’

It is only, you perceive, where the field is large — commensurate to the greatness of the actor — that he can be *like himself* — that he can do justice to himself, or feel that ambitious spurring of the soul which is conscious always of her true occasions.”

CHAPTER XIV.

RIFLE PRACTICE — WRONG CUSTOMER — ADDITION TO THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

“You see this chase is hotly followed, friends.” — KING HENRY V.

WE arrest the further dialogue which took place between the two before their separation. Horsey was gratified at the interest which Vernon seemed to take in his fortunes, for the simple but dignified manners of the young lawyer had impressed him with a respectful deference, which had the effect, not unfrequently, of restraining his exuberance of character, and compelling him to meditate awhile before speaking; a practice exceedingly novel to him, and one which kept him from sundry outbreaks of folly while they were in company together. He listened with unaccustomed patience to the exhortations of Vernon, and though he had not the courage to forbear the small game which he was even then pecking at, he acknowledged the

generally beneficial tenor of the advice given him. He was not willing to believe that the forest world in which he was about to penetrate was unsusceptible of present dramatic improvement, and still less was he willing to tolerate the suspicion, which his companion threw out, that the story of Tilton's theatrical establishment at Benton was a falsehood—a hoax invented for the simple purpose of securing him as an instrument in the prosecution of some ulterior purpose as yet unaccountable to either party. His heart was set upon obtaining the plaudits of the Bentonians, and his ears already rang prospectively with their clapping and huzzas. These, he thought, would not be amiss, even though at some future period, he struck at the higher game of the great metropolis. Small triumphs are the fore-runners of great ones; and he was one of those who thought it just as well to accept the wreath of myrtle, if the more enduring laurel could not be so easily procured. With this philosophy he was the more readily reconciled to a separation from the companion, in conjunction with whom, until the present hour, he fancied he was about to enter the green and verdurous fields of an actor's immortality. He had many regretful quotations to utter; many protestations of fidelity and friendship.

“And should you want help, Harry,” he cried out as they rode asunder, “should you get into any spree and want a backer to see you safe, give me a sign, a signal—let me have the cue—and by the ghost of Garrick, I will need no prompter to tell me what my part should be in the business. I will be at your side in the twinkling of an eye, and they shall be Turks and Trojans of heavy metal, indeed—Syracusans of stamp and substance—who will hold their ground long before us twain—my Pythias and myself.”

Long and heartily did the adhesive actor wring the hand of his companion, to whom, though not an ascetic, the scenic exuberance of his friend had become almost an annoyance; and he found it a relief to escape from that excruciating degree of affection to which he felt unable to make more than a very partial return. His escape was at length effected, though Horsey, like Prior's thief:—

“Now fitted the halter, now traversed the cart,
And often took leave, but seemed loath to depart.”

It will somewhat confirm the truth of the assurances of sorrow which he expressed at parting with his friend, to say, that, for full twenty minutes after leaving him, he uttered no single quotation, unless we may except the fragment of a speech made to his horse, the renewal of whose irregular motion had revived all the peculiar sensibility of old sores made the day previous.

“Ah, Bowline, Bowline! Shakspeare almost gave me warning against thee in particular; certainly I have the ‘rubbers,’ though I did not expect them. If you go on at this rate, you limping d—l, Romeo’s quarters will be in no condition to climb balconies, or do the necessary action of a lover. I am parched and peeled, hip and thigh, literally scalded, as tender as a steamed potato, and as *raw* as a thoroughly done one. Well, well, it is to be expected. One should not complain where the end promises so much. These, I suppose, are the first pains which a man is expected to take in getting on in the world—the pains of immortality, the condition of greatness—a suffering in the flesh for the ambitious workings of the spirit, which should teach a man, among other lessons, to value the glory, when won, which he purchases at so much cost. Well, it is but a skin-deep suffering, after all, and there is some consolation in knowing, you limping rascal, that I can make you share it. My spurring shall equal your scalding, or there never yet went two words to a bargain.”

While the actor communed after this manner with his uneasy steed, Harry Vernon, better mounted, was making his forward way with a speed rather greater than his wont, as it was his object to make up for the time lost in waiting upon Horsey’s operations at the hut of Yarbers, and, subsequently, in that which had been consumed in their parting. He had ridden probably an hour after that event, and the motion of his horse had been suffered to relax into that ordinary walking trot to which most horses on long travel naturally incline. The thoughts of the rider, busied with other subjects, were now abstracted from the movements of his steed, and he was gradually becoming indifferent to, and unobservant of, surrounding objects, when he was brought to his senses by the sudden and fast trampling of a horse’s feet behind him.

Looking round, what was his surprise to behold Edward

Mabry, the lover of Mary Stinson, in the person of his pursuer. Vernon drew up and awaited him—readily guessing the purpose of his pursuit, and really glad that Horsey had taken another course, and got so greatly the start of one whose desperate hostility was apparent in every glance of his eye, and in every motion of his malignant and now wretched countenance.

The tokens of the combat of the preceding night were prominently offensive. His eyes were so swollen that the orbs were barely perceptible, and the sight must have been barely sufficient to enable him to ride. This condition of his face made the rage which appeared its leading expression look monstrous and fiendish. His lips were tremulous though closed, the veins upon his forehead tensely corded; and the skin around, affected by the injuries done to his eyes, had assumed in spots, a dark, dirty green color, which added to the general hideousness of his present aspect. He was armed with a rifle, which, perhaps, in the present situation of his eyes, would be found far less formidable than usual.

Glaring upon Vernon with an expression of hostility which almost left it doubtful in our hero's mind if he himself were not also the object of his pursuit, he demanded to know what had become of his companion. His words were few and passionate, and the disrespectful manner in which he spoke, and the brutal epithets which he applied at the same time to the person for whom he inquired, had the effect of producing a certain degree of irritation in the mind of Vernon, which kept his answer in suspense. The youth repeated his demand in a style of insolence more offensive than before.

"I have no desire to quarrel with you," said Vernon, "but still less am I disposed to satisfy the demands of any one who makes them disrespectfully. I will not answer your question. I will tell you nothing about Mr. Horsey or his movements."

"Ha! then you take his place. You shall answer for him yourself," cried the other, dropping his reins and grasping his rifle in both hands. The instinctive and natural movement of Vernon was to close with him at once, and thus defeat the contemplated employment of the deadly weapon with which he threatened him. He wheeled his horse instantly beside that of the assailant, and his left hand grasped the weapon also.

"What mean you, madman? What would you do?" demanded Vernon, sternly. "But that I pity you, your movement this instant would have prompted me to shoot you down like a dog. If you are angry with Mr. Horsey, that is no business of mine. I am not answerable for his conduct nor his absence."

"Then tell me where he is," replied the other hoarsely, "or stand in his shoes."

"Neither, sir. I will give you no assistance in your folly."

A scuffle followed this reply. Mabry strove to back his horse in order that he might employ his rifle. Such at least seemed his object to Vernon, whose efforts were directed to defeat this purpose; and suffering the other to recede, he addressed all his strength to obtaining possession of the weapon, which Mabry, in the sudden backward movement of his horse, was compelled to yield up, or suffer himself to be drawn with it between the two animals. Furious at this disadvantage he leaped to the ground and drawing a bowie knife, rushed forward. But a few paces divided them, and the rapidity of his assailant's movement was such that Vernon felt he could neither take aim, nor prepare the weapon in time to anticipate his attack. With this conviction he put spurs to his horse and drew him up only after he had put a space of fifty yards between them.

"Advance upon me a second time, young man, and I shoot you without scruple. You are a madman to act in this manner. What have I done to you? Of what do you complain? Do you think I will answer your questions, or the questions of anybody, who does not speak respectfully? Do you suppose I will assist in guiding you to the commission of murder? You are mistaken in me no less than in yourself. In a fair struggle, were I so disposed, I should put you down as effectually as you were put down last night; and were it not that I should derive but little satisfaction from such a victory, your insolent language might have provoked me to have done so before this. Think a little before you move farther in this business. By this time the person you seek is far beyond your reach; and as for me, you gain nothing, I assure you, by annoying me. I will return you your rifle if you will promise me that you will not use it."

"I will make no promise," replied the other, leaping again upon his steed, "we shall soon be at closer quarters."

And with these words, with a fury even more blind than his hurt vision, the madman was preparing to urge his horse forward upon the speaker, heedless of warning, and in utter defiance of the lifted rifle.

"I warn you again — once, twice, thrice, I warn you," were the slow, deliberate tones of Vernon's voice, as, dropping the rifle in his left hand, he lifted the ranging sights before his eye, "approach me, Mr. Mabry, with bared weapon, and I will certainly shoot you."

"I defy you, I dare you. Shoot, and be d——d! I fear you not," said the fellow, as he put spurs to his horse.

"Hold!" cried the voice of one who darted before his path, emerging into the main road from a little Indian trail that crossed it at nearly equal distances between the contending parties. The interruption was seasonable enough. Vernon had already cocked the rifle, and the approach, by ten steps more, of his furious assailant, would have had the effect of drawing his fire. The entrance of the third personage relieved him from a dreadful necessity.

"Hold, you, Ned Mabry, you meal-headed fellow! What the deuce is it you're a-doing?"

The abrupt salutation arrested the rash onset of the youth, and probably saved his life. The stranger was a tall backwoodsman, fully six feet in height, and solid and massive like a tower. He rode a coal-black horse of proportions and strength of corresponding greatness with his own—a keen, fire-eyed animal, broad-chested, strongly quartered, slim in fetlock, small in hoof, long-necked, narrow-headed, and with a mane, which, though plaited and divided on either side, seemed scarcely less copious than that in the full possession of the one. The person of his rider was no less symmetrical and erect than it was large and powerful. His cheeks were of a fine sanguine hue, his eyes bright, blue, and lively, denoting good-nature, with an arch, lurking humor, that perhaps indicated a fondness for his jest in defiance of the broken bones which are sometimes apt to follow it. His nose was finely Roman, and his forehead though neither broad nor high, was yet full, suitably large, and

contributed to that general expression of character, rather than talents, which belonged to his other features. He looked earnestly for a few minutes upon Vernon while addressing Mabry, to whom he spoke in the familiar language of an old acquaintance.

"Well, now you're a pretty lark to serve me in this way, Ned Mabry. Didn't you promise me you wouldn't do anything more with this business. Didn't you say you'd let the stranger get off, and say no more about it; and here, only two hours after, I find you, like a cursed maw-mouth that grows blind when he sees a worm wriggle, here you're mad after the bait though there's a hook in it. Don't you see the rifle—you a'n't bullet-proof, I reckon?"

"It's my own rifle, Walter," said the assailant, sullenly.

"The d—l it is!" cried the other with a laugh; "then it's a sign I haven't come a minute too soon. You've got another warning of the truth I told you. Look you, stranger," turning to Vernon, to whom the sudden arrival of a third person, who seemed an associate of his enemy, only cautioned to greater watchfulness; "look you, stranger, you mustn't take it hard that this mad fellow set upon you, seeing you've took his sweetheart from him, and put his two eyes in double-mourning. It's mighty hard to lose one's gal and get a beating all in the same night, and I reckon there's a mighty few of us that wouldn't be just as mad as Ned Mabry after it."

"But I've done neither," said Vernon; "I've neither beaten him, nor taken his sweetheart from him. I have done him no sort of injury, intentional or otherwise; and he has no more excuse to assail me than he has to assail the man in the moon."

"How! how the d—l's this, Ned? Didn't you tell me?"

"Not this one—the other—the man that was travelling with him."

"The splinters! and so you set upon the wrong man. Well, I say, that's being owl-blind, stone-blind, horse-blind; blind of three eyes, without even a smeller to go by. What the devil made you trouble him?"

This question was soon answered, and the cause of difference explained. The good-natured stranger proceeded to patch up the affair, and, if possible, reconcile the parties. On Vernon's

side this was no great difficulty. The other, foiled on every hand, baffled so far in the pursuit of one who had humbled him so successfully, and suffering from his bruises of body no less than those of mind, was just in that state of stupid doggedness when conciliation was almost as much thrown away upon him as argument and explanation. More was done by the sheer influence of the stranger's wish, than by his reasoning. The rustic lover seemed to recognise in Wat or Walter Rawlins—for such was the name of the last-comer—a superior, before whom he stood irresolute and dependent. He confirmed the promise made in his behalf, by the latter, to Vernon, that he would offer him no farther injury or insult; and, at his solicitation, he returned the rifle to Mabry, though not until he had pushed the flint from the teeth of the cock, thus depriving him of the power of doing any immediate harm with the instrument; unless he went better provided than usual. He had performed this movement with so little effort, and so much adroitness, while the lock of the gun lay beneath his right hand, and on the opposite side of his horse to that where the other parties stood, that he had escaped observation; and, satisfied with the possession of his weapon, Mabry gave no glance to the condition in which it was returned to him.

“And now, Ned Mabry, go you home, and be quiet,” said his companion. “You promised me before to do nothing in this business, and it’s a dead weight on your credit now that you didn’t keep your word. You ain’t in any condition now to look up your enemies. With them eyes you could not see to hit a squirrel, though he sat on a bare stump grinning at you with all his grinders; and how should you look, going after a fellow who’s got his own peepers wide awake. Go back, I say, and keep quiet till you see me again. As for this business of Yarbbers, himself,” continued the pacificator, drawing his companion away to some little distance from the place where Vernon stood, and lowering his voice to a whisper—“say nothing till you see me. There’s something strange about it, and we’ve got some mighty strange neighbors. Don’t whisper it to saint or sinner till we can tell whether it’s a safe person that’s to hear it, and this there’s no telling jist at this time, when the whole country is in a real topsy-turvy, and strange men come about us hearing

what they can, and telling nothing in return. There's nothing to do but to keep quiet, as I tell you, and out of harm's way. I won't be gone longer than a week; in the meantime, get your eyes open if you can, and keep 'em so. I'll keep on a while with this stranger, and see what I can worm out of him. He don't look and behave like a man who was one of Yarbers's kidney, and I've a sort o' notion you're quite wrong in your guess that they're in one and the same business. I'll worm it out of him in no time, I reckon. If he's got the cunning of a rogue, I've got cunning enough to see how deep it goes; and, if he ain't a rogue, why, then, there will be one more honest man found to help the rest."

Much more was said ere they separated, though the conference occupied but little time. Vernon, meanwhile, bade them a courteous "good-day," and was about to set forward, when the voice of Rawlins arrested him.

"Stay a bit, stranger, if so be you like company. I'm driving on in the same track with you for a few miles farther, at least; and, if you're like myself, you'll agree that it's no bad thing to have somebody at your elbow, if it's only to answer questions. When a man's by himself, he's apt to think strange things; and the devil's more apt to be on the lookout for a single traveller than when they go in pairs to strengthen each other. I am a ra'al joker when the humor suits, and I can sing, too, when the weather ain't against it, and the frogs don't rise in the throat. So you see—"

"Say no more," said Vernon; "it will please me to have your company."

"Spoken like a man, and I'll be with you after a word more with this unbroken colt. Now, Ned Mabry, you promise me to give over the chase of this fellow?"

Such was the promise which Rawlins exacted from his companion, ere they separated—a promise reluctantly given, and badly kept; since he had scarce reached the cross-roads in returning, ere his rage resumed full sway over him, and he struck into the path which Horsey had taken, giving full rein to his horse, in the hope to make up for that loss of time in the pursuit which had been occasioned by the events of the previous hour. Vernon was joined by Rawlins, and in a few moments,

on the place which they had just occupied, stood the outlaw Saxon, who emerged from the woods on one hand, and was immediately after joined by a comrade named Jones, who came to the spot from an opposite quarter.

"I would give something to know what Mabry and Rawlins had to talk about so long in secret," said Saxon. "Could you make out nothing?"

"Not a syllable," said Jones. "His coming was untimely."

"Yes; but for that we should have lost one who may become an enemy. Yarbers, certainly, would have been the gainer; and we should have had good reason for tying the arms of this fellow Vernon behind him. This, however, we must do before long."

"We must use Judge Nawls for that business, I reckon."

"Ay, none better," said Saxon; "but do you go ahead, and keep on the haunches of these fellows. Rawlins, I suppose, is on his way to the old methodist quarter. He and Vernon know each other for the first time, and they will probably separate at Brother Badger's turn-out. Do not lose him from sight. I will join you before midnight."

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEAGLES IN FULL CRY—PISTOL-PRACTICE—AN ADVENTURE—A RESCUE, AND BLOODSHED.

"The noyse thereof cald forth that straunger knight,
To weet what dreadfull thing was there in hond ;
Where whenas two brave knights in bloody fight,
With deadly rancour he enraunged fond,
His sunbroad shield about his wrest he bond,
And shining blade unsheathed."—SPENSER.

VERNON rode on with his new companion, Rawlins—whom he soon discovered to be quite a sociable, good-humored fellow—with a speed which was intended to make up for lost time. It was his desire to reach and cross the ferry over the Chittaloosa before sunset, in order that he might find lodgings on the opposite side at a conveniently early hour. But this purpose, when expressed, was discouraged by his companion.

"It will be quite dark before you can get across the ferry—which is more a ferry and a half than a ferry; mighty bad crossing, and a strange up and down, in and out, turning and twisting contrivance as ever you did see—and then, when you're across, it's a chance if you find any place to stay at, that can be called a place at all, under seven or eight miles. But if you'll go with me to old Billy Badger's to-night—he's only two miles from the ferry—you can take an early start in the morning, and have a whole day before you. Billy Badger's a crumpy, stiff sort of a person—a raal, true-believing methodist, that preaches himself, when the parson don't come, and, to my way of thinking, makes a deuced sight the best prayer of any among them. He's rather strange in his ways, to be sure, but you'll be heartily welcome. He'll give you a good supper, but you must swallow the long grace that goes before it; and, if

one happens to be mighty hungry, it's a great trying of the patience. I've been a-bothered by it more than once before, but it's no use. Nothing can stop him when he once begins; and I do think if the house was a-fire, he'd sooner let it burn awhile than cut the prayer off in the middle. Now, I'm used to it myself, and don't mind it so much; but I think it only right, when I ax a man to another's house, that I should tell him what he's to look for."

"A good rule," said Vernon; "and without saying whether I will go with you or not, let me know whether Mr. Badger is in the habit of receiving company."

"Sure he is; he has 'em at all times and of all characters. Why, his house is something of a thoroughfare, you see; being so near the ferry, and folks a-travelling jist like you, and coming up late in the day, are mighty apt to go to old Billy's to spend the night."

"But that must give him a great deal of trouble, if he keeps no public house."

"Not a bit, or if it does, he don't mind it in consideration of the good company, and somebody to talk to. Though he's a gruff and grumpy sort of person, he's mighty fond of a confabulation, and so long as you'll listen, and even if you wont listen, he'll still talk on, exhorting, as it were, and mighty airnest. When he once gits hold of the flesh and the devil, there's no telling how long he'll hold on. It's no trifle that'll make him let go; and you'll see the blood git up into his face, and the veins grow big on his forehead, and the foam will come out and stand in his mouth-corners long before he'll think you've had enough. He never asks how you like the thing, for he always concludes that he knows best what's good for everybody; and as for disagreeing with him, when once you set eyes on him, you'll see for yourself that that's out of the question. I tell you, sir, Mr. Vernon, he looks like all the Laws and the Prophets; and he speaks as if he stood on a high place, and we were all put below to listen to him."

"A stern old man—a very judge in Israel—from your description."

"The very thing, Mr. Vernon; but then he's really kind as any man alive, though, for that matter, he hain't the knack of

showing it kindly. He'll help you up from the road with the look of the same fellow that knocked you down; and bind up your wounds with as sour a face all the while, as if his own bowie-knife had made them. He'll talk to you as if he thought you a rogue, just at the very time when he's lending you a cool hundred; and when he's helping you to the best on his table, he'll be grumbling something about the indulgences of the flesh, and the profligacies of appetite, and all that sort of thing; so, unless you set out to find a bundle of contradictions in everything he does and says, there's no telling how to take him."

"I've met with such a character before," said Vernon; "it is neither unusual nor unnatural, and only indicates a predominating self-esteem, that asserts its superiority by eccentricities of thought and manner. The eccentricities of men arise, mostly, from an undue estimate of their own importance, which flatters itself by the surprises it continually effects, by means of novelty and strangeness, in the minds of the observers. So long as these eccentricities hurt nobody, people are content to laugh or wonder at them; when they exceed this limit, the owner ceases to be a fool, and is locked up as a madman. Has this old gentleman a family?"

"He has a son who is nothing like him—a sly, cautious fellow, that I don't know whether to like or dislike—he's neither one thing nor t'other, and, to speak a truth, one reason against my liking him may be that he don't seem to like me."

"A good and sufficient reason. There are some love-verses which maintain this philosophy in strong and proper language:—

"What care I how fair she be,
If she be not fair for me."

Has the old gentleman no other family?"

"Yes," replied the other with a hesitating tone. "He's got a niece—a mighty fine girl, named Rachel, out of the Scriptures; the young man his son is named out of the Scriptures, too—they call him Gideon—though, I'm thinking that his name is all that he ever got out of the Holy Book, or ever will get. There's something wrong about him, I reckon."

"But Rachel, there nothing wrong about her—you don't dislike Rachel, do you, Mr. Rawlins? for, if you do, I shall begin to wonder why it is you visit the family."

“ Ah, Mr. Vernon, you’re a keen one. You must be a lawyer, I’m thinking. But you say right, there’s nothing wrong about Rachel, and if the truth is to be told, I may as well tell it at once—I do like Rachel. I think—though I don’t count her so pretty as some that I’ve seen and could mention—I think she is about the finest and best. She’s so sweet-tempered, and so modest and good; and then, she has a great deal more sense, and a power of l’arning, more than I ever expect to cram into this bigger noddle of mine. I confess to you, Mr. Vernon, I do like Rachel.”

The frankness of the rustic lover, had already placed the parties on the most friendly footing. His confession increased the respect which the lawyer had begun to entertain for him. He replied playfully :—

“ And reasoning, Mr. Rawlins, from what you have said of Gideon, I presume, one of your best arguments for liking Rachel is found in her liking you. Is it not so?—you love each other.”

There is, perhaps, nothing so likely to win the heart of a young lover, as to seek his confidence on the subject nearest to his affections. The interest we betray in his passion saves him from the fear of ridicule—an always prevalent fear with the tribe of passionates;—and that sinking fullness of heart which distinguishes the lover, must find some friendly bosom into which to pōur its hopes, its fears, its tumultuous and joyous expectancies.

The words of Vernon unsealed the fountain, and took the stone from its lips. After that, Rawlins had no further concealments. He grasped the hand of his companion, and, warning him the while to secrecy—a caution which was rather insisted upon by the respect which he had for the maiden, than because of any desire on his own part to maintain, as a secret, a fact which was so full to him of triumph as well as joy—he told him that he had been successful in persuading Rachel to regard him as the properest man in the country. His courtship, from the beginning, underwent development in all its details, with a more circumstantial distinctness than even that of Othello, though it did not appear that the affections of Rachel were secured for her lover through a like medium. The judgment of Rawlins deferred to that of the maiden of his heart.

He studiously insisted upon her mental superiority, and spoke in the becoming language of that humility which acknowledges the favor of fortune in his conquests, and assumes no share of the merit to himself.

"I will go with you to-night, Mr. Rawlins, and see this lady."

"Do, that's a friend, Mr. Vernon; it does me good when a man of sense and education talks with Rachel. She's mighty sweet-spoken and smart; has a whole closet-full of books; and sends to Natchy for more whenever she can get a chance. Now, other men would much rather have a wife to work and mend for them, and would count it mighty idle to see 'em poking over books; but I'm not that sort of man. I'd want my wife to talk respectably, jist the same as if she lived in a big city like Orleans; for if a man's poor as Job's turkey to-day, it's no reason he should be poor to-morrow. In this country, a man may git rich in double quick time, if he's only constant and sober to his business; and if the Lord spares me, Mr. Vernon. I'm bent on making my children men of substance and education. If I had no l'arning myself—and, like most of our people, seven months time would cover every hour of schooling I ever had,—I know the good of l'arning, and my children will have enough to do them good, whether I live or die, if so be their mother's able to give it them; and I'd sooner have my wife teaching her children to read and write, than darning stockings, or mending breeches, or doing any of that sort of business, which a nigger girl can do that never had any education at all."

It amused Vernon to hear his companion counting his chickens with so much complacency, and making his arrangements how to train them, even before they were hatched. He smiled with an expression of that humor upon his countenance which formed no small portion of his character.

"Of course, Mr. Rawlins, you have consulted with Rachel on this subject; you have told her your plans at length."

"To be sure I have. Do you think I'd keep such a matter from her? No, no, sir, as God's my judge there ain't anything in my bosom that I've kept from her ears, since that moment when she said 'yes' to my asking. It was only last week—I go to see her about once a-week, Mr. Vernon—it was only last week I tried to get her to say, if she had a son, which she

would like best to have him, a lawyer or a doctor; and it was a great worry to me to get her to talk about the matter at all, and what she did say was as much as to say, "Have your own way about it," for it came to as little. Now, Mr. Vernon, I know that there's nothing so troublesome in families as a difference between man and wife about these things, and I wanted to put the matter out of all danger of dispute. It was strange to me that Rachel, who can talk so well about most matters, and give me so much good advice when I want it, shouldn't be willing to tell me her real notions."

"Perhaps she thought there was time enough a year or two hence for the consideration of the subject. You, on the other hand, I perceive, are for taking time by the forelock. You prefer being quick to being slow. She, too, might have been thinking of girl-children, only; who, of course, can neither be doctors nor lawyers."

"Well, that's true, there may be something in that, Mr. Vernon, but then, again, you know it's an even chance that we should have boys as well as girls. I was going to tell her that, but she broke off suddenly, because she thought she heard the old man calling her from the house."

The unsophisticated lover impressed Vernon favorably as regarded both himself and mistress, by the naturalness with which he detailed his own secret thoughts and desires, and the manners of the damsel. That Rachel was more thoughtful than her lover, and quite as good a tactician, he had no sort of doubt from the chapter of developments which had been made by the former. How long Rawlins would have gone on in a narrative which was too pleasing to his heart and fancies to suffer the obtrusion of other thoughts and objects on his mind, it would be difficult to say. He was checked by an abrupt inquiry of Vernon, and brought back to the more earthly objects of humanity, with some slowness and a little reluctance.

"Hear you those dogs? there are several beagles—do you hunt much in this neighborhood, Mr. Rawlins?"

"Beagles! I don't hear any, Mr. Vernon."

"I have heard them for the last twenty minutes; but the truth is, Mr. Rawlins, when a man's in love he hears nothing and sees little that does not concern his mistress. This is

your condition. For the last half hour we have talked of nothing else, and you have heard nothing that did not call for an answer about *her*. Now I have heard the baying of these beagles beside and before us, as if scattered, and crossing on false scents. Who keeps a pack about here?"

"A pack of beagles! I don't think there's such a thing in the county, Mr. Vernon. There's one or two here and there in different places—there's some two or three I know of, but no more. John Herne—he's something of a hunter, and has several dogs, but only one hound, and that's but a poor affair. Macartney, the Scotchman, that lives on the edge of Atala, he has one, but he don't hunt. Ned Mabry, the chap that would have mauled you this morning, if you had let him, he has two, and both of them fine pups, but he's not the man to think of deer-hunting to-day. Besides him, I can't call to mind another man in our neighborhood that keeps a beagle."

"That is strange, for I have certainly heard several at different points of the compass within this hour. Hark! Hear you not now?"

"Yes, that's a beagle, but it sounds mighty faint, and may be, after all, from a tongue that you never hear close, and the dog that own's it ain't so easy to be seen. You know there's a story in these parts of a ghost-dog that haunts the woods about the Big Black; they call him the white dog of Chitta-Loosa, and old folks tell strange things about him; how he let his master be murdered, and now has nothing to do but to run through the woods constantly looking after him. He is said to keep in the swamp of the Big Black, and you hear him always just as evening is coming on, as if he was calling to his master, and was making moan that another night was near at hand, and he hadn't yet found him. There's a-many sounds in these woods, and sights too, I've heard them tell of, that you'll hear without knowing where they come from, or who they belong to. People about here don't mind them much now, since they've got a little used to them; but when I first came on the Big Black, it made my heart beat mighty quick, I tell you, and made me clap long spurs to my horse, to hear them; and even now, I catch myself saying my prayers, without knowing when I begin, to find myself belated on the edge of the swamp, nobody

with me, and on a sudden hear a whisper close at my elbow, and may be a laugh and a clapping of the hands behind me."

"But why should you think this anything more than ordinary? This whispering, and laughing, and clapping—nay, this baying of dogs—may all be the work of men."

"No men, no men, Mr. Vernon!—I'm a man myself, and can answer that. I'm a stout man, sound in wind and limb, six feet in stocking foot, and able to swing a cotton bag, and that's a-much for anybody to do. Besides, I'm not afraid of any fellow that ever I saw yet, that had no better help than flesh and blood, broad shoulders, and solid muscle, can give him; and when I've turned and challenged them that made these noises, and put into the swamps after them—and I've a keen nose, and a quick eye among the bushes, Mr. Vernon—and after all could find nothing to lay a finger on, why, then it was time to think of saying one's prayers, and using one's spurs. Now, don't you go to think from what I'm saying that I'm easily frightened with ghosts and images. I'm frightened at nothing I can see and feel; but when a body can neither see nor feel—when eyes and hands fail, what's to be done? Am I to stand then, waiting what's to come? No, no, I'm clear for clean heels without waiting for orders. I asked Rachel if it was right for me to run in such cases, and she clearly agreed it was. Well, when our counts come to the same ending, there's nothing more to be said about it, and run's the word for me. A ghost that I can see, or a man that I can feel, will never make me stir my ankles faster than I choose; but I don't think it's any shame to use one's trotters when he can make no use of his other limbs."

"Give your horse a light spur now, Mr. Rawlins," said Vernon, gravely, "and let us ride on a little faster. These beagles seem to increase in number, and I can distinguish the baying of no less than three from several quarters. If there be so few in the county as you assert, then are these noises the more mysterious, and they must have some object. Now, as I am one of those who will not easily believe in your white dog of the Chitta-Loosa, or in the ghost of a dog at all, I am persuaded that what we hear are the voices of real flesh and blood beings,

whether of hounds or men. If they are the voices of men, they imitate well, and must have some leading object for acquiring the practice; if they are those of beagles, then may we get a glimpse of a close chase, and, perhaps, join in a pursuit, which I am very fond of. A pistol-bullet may bring down a deer at a small distance, and I have known a man get a shot near enough to enable him to do business with a pistol. I will have mine in readiness."

"I will not fail you, Mr. Vernon," said the other, in suppressed accents, and bringing his horse more closely to the side of his companion. "It's jist as well to have your pistols ready, if we are to seek for these hounds you speak of, for, to tell you a truth, it has been for a long time my notion that there were men at the bottom of some of these noises of dogs; not that there are not other noises of the woods that could never have been made by any man—that I'll swear for—and if you know'd half as much of our country and the swamps as I do, you'd be for thinking like myself. I could tell you of the strangest things—"

"Not now! not now!" exclaimed Vernon, impatiently, "but get your pistols out, my good fellow; it may be a word and a blow with us. I hear one sound responding to another, and the last did not seem more than a short hundred yards distant, in that thick branch. Let us ride apart; a rifle's sight could cover us both."

Speaking thus, Vernon spurred his horse forward in a smart canter, while Rawlins, obeying his suggestion, prepared his weapons, and followed him at a horse's length behind. They had scarcely increased their motion, when a sudden clamor reached their ears in front; a hoarse summons, the voice of a man in anger, mingled with lower tones, as if in expostulation. These were followed by a shriek—a repeated shriek, and the accents of a woman—of woman in distress! This put a life into the limbs, and a fire into the hearts of the two young men, which gave them no time for reflection, and left them in no doubt as to the course which they should take, and the duty which lay before them.

"Lord God!" was the somewhat irreverent exclamation of Rawlins, "Lord God! Mr. Vernon, if it should be Rachel!"

"It is a woman, Mr. Rawlins!—follow me close if you be a man. This is no time to loiter."

"You won't find me backward, by the powers! I'm at you, and after you. There's no scare in Wat Rawlins at the push. Lord help us! I'm afeard it's Rachel. She loves to walk in the woods so, every afternoon. Git up, you lazy b—h, or I'll knife your quarters!"

The last speech, warm from the blood, and breaking out in defiance of all restraint, was addressed to his horse, which, in his anger, it will be seen that he made feminine. The animal, though fleet, and now doing his best, yet lacked the speed of Vernon's, and the distance, small at first, was increasing fast between them. The fear that another should do for the safety of his sweetheart that which he alone aimed to accomplish, was wormwood to his spirit; and his apostrophe to his steed was coupled with the driving and constant application of the spur, until the flanks of the generous animal soon grew red under the infliction. The shrieks were renewed—fast, sharp, imploring—terminating, at length, in a long, piercing scream, which grew feeble, at last, as if from exhaustion; and when it closed, the thrilling words of Vernon, as he looked behind, and cried to Rawlins to follow, sent a creeping chill of terror to the heart of the rustic.

"Push, push, or we shall be too late!"

"I'm here—I'm close! This d——d beast! I hope it ain't Rachel! Get on, you brute!—Everything stands in the way; the trees, and bushes, and I never saw the creature so dull before. Get up, you clodhopping beast, or I'll kill you, by all that's certain! I've always told Rachel about walking out so far, but she wouldn't mind me, and said there was no danger; but I knew there was danger. and I said so. But these women—they won't mind anything—they're so obstinate if they're a little smart; and so—d—in the b—h, she'll stop full short before long, and want to take a roll in the road."

There was no good reason to justify this last apprehension of the excited woodman. The animal was covering ground with a rapidity which might have done some credit to Turpin's mare. But a few seconds had passed since the first alarm, and nothing but the impatience and the special apprehensions which

had seized him on a sudden, in regard to the woman who was dearest to his heart, could have so utterly confounded his consciousness and judgment on all other subjects.

To be passed and left behind by the young lawyer—the citizen—one of a class for whom the forest-born of our country are very apt to entertain a very wholesome contempt as respects the exercise of all those qualities which require personal strength and agility, and more especially, in the management of a horse—also added to his affliction; which, however, was not destined to endure long.

Vernon had already entered upon the scene of action. The roads crossed—a large area was formed by the contact of the two paths—and here the strife was in progress, and hence the clamor.

A single glance at the objects before him, gave Vernon a correct notion of the affair. A travelling carriage crossed the road, the horses being checked and held by a man whose muffled face, cap drawn over his eyes, coarse garments, rude manner, not to speak of the pistol in his grasp, at once declared him to be a ruffian and an assailant. An old man, the proprietor of the vehicle, whose white locks and bald head were uncovered and exposed, lay on the ground beneath the knee of another ruffian, while a third was busied in rifling the carriage of its contents. Two females, one a tall maiden of seventeen or thereabouts, the other a child of twelve, were on their knees to the villain who held the old man down, imploring, seemingly, for mercy; the younger of the two, clinging to the arm of the assailant, seeking with a childish pertinacity, and in utter ignorance of any danger to herself, to push him from his position.

The screams which had alarmed the travellers arose from these; and they were continued by the younger of the damsels long after the elder had deemed it—the first alarm being over—an idle mode of remedying the misfortune, for the cure of which she probably meditated other means. Perhaps there were other apprehensions of womanhood more dreadful to the pure heart, which made her fearful to offend the insolence of those to whom neither herself nor parent—for such was the old man beneath the grasp of the ruffian—could oppose any

powers of defence. Her efforts were those of prayer, expostulation and entreaty, until the approach of Vernon, whom she first beheld, suggested new hopes of rescue; and then her screams were joined to those of her younger sister, and gave a new impulse to the movements of our hero and his companion who followed close upon his heels.

There was but little time for reflection—none for hesitation, and the mood and character of Vernon were such as to require neither. To assail the assailants, to rescue the victims, was an instinct that sent him the nearest way to work; and coming, as he did, somewhat suddenly upon the robbers, he was able to effect that which, in a state of greater preparation on their part, it would have been fatal for him even to attempt.

Their own interest in the prize, and the clamors of the young women, had kept them from hearing the tread of the approaching horsemen; and as they came into the cross-roads from the opposite track, they were totally unseen until within thirty yards of the party. It was then too late to take any of those precautions by which nothing would have been more easy than to have shot them down at their approach, without risking an exchange of bullets.

As it was, a single bay of the beagle—their accustomed signal—was the only warning which the more busy robbers received from the companion who held the horses, and who occupied, with them and the carriage, the upper part of the road. The ruffian who bestrid the prostrate gentleman turned about at the signal, only to receive the bullet of Vernon, unerringly aimed at his head. He fell prostrate upon the body of the old man, and his blood and brains covered his face and garments. In the next moment, the robber in possession of the carriage fired at Vernon, and was about to leap with a second pistol upon him, when the appearance of Rawlins, who made his *entrée* with a shout which might have done credit to the lungs of Stentor, determined the assailant to trust his heels rather than his weapon; and without giving a look to his comrade, he darted into the opposite woods, leaving the carriage between himself and his foes. He who held the horses, kept his ground until Rawlins had approached him within a few paces, when, lifting his weapon, with as deliberate an aim as the circum-

stances of his position would allow, he fired, but ineffectually, at the sturdy woodman.

Could the latter have seen the bitter, nay, venomous expression of face which the fellow gave him ere he shot, he would have congratulated himself, indeed, that it was not Rachel who had fallen into his hands.

Vernon was the first to pursue the escaping ruffians, but he had scarcely entered the wood ere he felt himself growing sick and faint; and then, for the first time, he found himself wounded in the thigh. He returned to the scene of action, and with difficulty alighted from his horse. The old man and his daughters, whom he had rescued, came about him to acknowledge and thank him for his services; but exhaustion, from loss of blood, now overcame him, and he sunk to the ground with a dim consciousness while he was falling, that the old man was the very person whom he sought—the very William Maitland who had defrauded the bank and involved Carter, to the loss of so many thousands.

But this impression soon gave place to another, and it seemed to the swooning youth that the features of the man were at once absorbed in those of a lovely virgin—such a vision as had filled his dreaming fancy the night he slept at the hovel of Mrs. Yarbers;—a form of chiselled symmetry, and a face, of the exquisite beauty of which, the soul, alone, could feel the perfection and the charm, in those vague and spiritual imaginings which come to the youthful heart when it first dreams of **love**—which come to it but once, and is believed by it for ever

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FUGITIVE FATHER—THE DAUGHTER—EVENTS GRADUALLY
DEVELOP—GLIMPSES BEYOND.

"Why do you strive so — whither would you fly
You can not wrest yourself away from care,
You may from counsel; you may shift your place,
But not your person; and another clime
Makes you no other."

FLETCHER.

THE woodman who had continued the pursuit of the ruffians without being at all apprized of the malicious aim of one of them upon him, from which he had been so fortunate as to escape, soon found his efforts unavailing to overtake them. They had made their way into a canebrake immediately contiguous, in whose thick, fostering glooms and secret abodes, they could easily defy and baffle the search of any hundred men. Ignorant of the hurt of Vernon, whom he had seen enter the forest in pursuit, like himself, he shook his hand in anger at the sheltering recesses in which the robbers were lost from sight, and returned toward the scene of action, with a degree of composure, which seemed to regard the fatigue of his horse as superior to all other considerations.

His astonishment and concern, when he discovered the insensible condition of his companion, was worthy of a much longer acquaintance, and a more social and equal relationship than had existed between them. A few moments sufficed to convince him that his friend was not dead, nor, perhaps, badly injured; and a few more enabled him to kick the dead robber with a quiet conviction that he could do no more hurt. The features of the ruffian he inspected carefully; but if he had any knowledge of them before, he kept the matter to himself, and having emptied the pockets of all that they contained of

value, and possessed himself of the pistols with which the fellow had been armed, but which the true and prompt shot of Vernon had prevented him from using, he left the carcass in the highway, with probably some such motive as that of the woodman when he kills a snake—namely, the start and momentary terror which such a spectacle will provoke in the spectator.

This business was the work of a few moments only; and he now addressed himself seriously to the task of assisting his wounded companion, and directing the further movements of the party, all the members of which were laboring under more or less excitement and apprehension. The whole scene was over in a few minutes, but the full pressure of its terrors and dangers had not passed entirely away. The old gentleman, who had been rescued, was even then busy in cleansing his face and bosom, as well as he might, from the blood and brains of the slain robber which had spurted over them. He was a fine-looking man, of very venerable aspect; but there was an incertitude in his looks, and a tremulousness of limb in his movements, which seemed to the mind of the woodman strangely inconsistent with the fine, manly mould in which nature had cast his frame. It was also apparent to our forester that there was a fidgety uneasiness in his manner, which denoted apprehensions no less active at the moment of his rescue and seeming safety, than when he lay under the weapon of the robber. He spoke confusedly, yet not with rapidity; checked and interrupted himself repeatedly; caught up his speech before he had completed his sentences; corrected, or strove to correct his expression; and increased his confusion, as folks are very apt to do, by anticipating it. His determination on little matters seemed to undergo alteration quite as often as his speech; and in all that he said and did, he exhibited to the countryman, who was not entirely obtuse, that purposeless, imbecile character, which is conscious of much to be done, yet is capable of nothing, and despairs even while it undertakes, and falters before fatigue.

Yet, so far as the ordinary circumstances are involved, which produce fear in the minds of men, the stranger had shown himself hardy enough. It is true, he did not offer resistance to the

robbers, though armed; but this arose as well from the manner in which he had been surprised by them, as from a proper conviction that he could not hope to resist them with any chance of success; and might, by doing so, have provoked their ill-treatment of his daughters, for whose safety he had shown all the solicitude of a father. He had not betrayed so much alarm for his own safety, while actually beneath the body of his assailant, as he did now, speaking of the event to the sturdy woodman, by whose assistance, in part, his rescue had been achieved. Indeed, his timidity, uneasiness, and downcast looks while he spoke, surprised the latter quite as much as they vexed him; and his words were spoken with the view to reassuring the courage which he could not but think—and this too with some feelings of contempt—had been quite too much cast down by the strife through which it had just gone.

“There’s no sort of danger now, old gentleman, while we’re so strong around you. It won’t be any two robbers of the Chitta-Loosa that’ll venture to lay thumb and fingers on the nose of Wat Rawlins, and he with his eyes open. So, since you’re safe now, and don’t seem to have lost anything, take your seat in your wagon, while I help Vernon into the bottom of it. You must make some room for him, young lady, and don’t be frightened at a little blood. It is good blood, and spilt in your own behalf, so you may look on it with a sort of pleasure, if you ain’t too faint-hearted—which I don’t think so much your case as that of the old gentleman. He’s mighty uneasy now, though for what there’s no telling. Why don’t you mount, old gentleman, and put yourself in readiness?”

In some agitation, the stranger turned to his daughter, and a brief conversation was carried on between the two in whispers. The woodman remarked that the fine eye of the maiden was kindled, her cheek flushed, and he could hear her distinctly exclaim, at the conclusion of a long and very earnest sentence: “Do not—do not think of such a thing, dear father; common humanity, alone, were there no other reasons, should require this; now, it is the due—gratitude—”

The rest of the words were lost to the listener, who, at the same time, busied himself in binding a handkerchief around the thigh of the youth, in the hope to arrest the bleeding.

While thus engaged, the traveller approached him, and asked how far they might be at that moment from the first ferry.

The question surprised the woodman, who looked up at the speaker with increased surprise. With a mind so utterly unsophisticated as his own, he could conceive of no condition of things justifying the reluctance of the traveller to lend himself to the work of succoring one to whom he owed so great a service. His wonder, however, did not extend to the conduct of the elder maiden. She had stooped to assist him in his rude surgery, and had yielded the mantle from her shoulder to help in binding up the hurts of his patient. But his eye spoke to her father a different language from that which his lips addressed to her. To him, he looked the surprise he felt, and something more. Scorn was mingled with his wonder, and anger rose no less upon his lips than upon his countenance.

"The ferry!" he exclaimed—"the ferry! Why, what the diccans can you be after? Ain't there time enough for that question to-morrow, or the next day, or the day after, or any day for the next six months to come? We can give you house-room, stranger, as I told you before, and keep you in the dry, though it rains rivers. There's old Billy Badger, that'll give you something more than a supper—a sermon with it—and be glad that you eat heartily, if you can hear well. Come, old man, give us a lift, while we set the lad in your wagon. He won't oncommode the ladies much, and, if so be he does, it was all their own fault and yours, to git into difficulties, and he's hurt in gitting you out of them. Give us a lift, and look better pleased, and, by gimini! I'll forget how little minded you seem to help the man that helped you."

"Do my father no injustice," interposed the elder maiden; "he is not indifferent to the fate of your friend—of our friend—and will do what you require, and all that he can, for his succor and relief. Do not suppose, even had you not been nigh to urge it, that we should have needed any persuasion to move us to so necessary an act of duty. No, sir, believe me, had there been no better strength than that of my own feeble frame, that should have been given for the service of this gentleman; and, though I sank beneath the burden, I should, at least, have

lone my utmost to find succor for one who has been of the greatest succor to us."

"I believe you, my dear young lady, I believe you; there's no mistake in your face, by the powers! I believe you just as much as if your words had come from the lips of Rachel herself; but the old gentleman—why don't he spunk up, and lend a hand?"

The keen eye of the woodman was fixed upon the traveller as he spoke these words. The latter became still more confused at the apostrophe; his glance sank to the ground, and he faltered out some only half-intelligible accents, about the necessity he was under of pursuing his journey, and the inconveniences which would arise to him, of any unexpected delay; and here he turned to his daughter, and proceeded to repeat what he had said to the woodman, touching the exigencies of his situation. The blunt language of Rawlins anticipated the maiden, and prevented her replying to a speech, which, though partially intelligible only, seemed greatly to distress her.

"By the powers! old gentleman, to my thinking you have been saying anything but the right thing. What are you talking about your journey for, at this time, when here's the man that saved your throats, and your money, and may be, God only knows! saved this handsome young lady, that's your own daughter, from something worse than all. Here he is, I say, lying on the ground, knocked over in helping you out of the hobble, and wanting help himself now to get him to a soft bed, and a quiet place to get well in. If it hadn't a-been for him, who knows what might have happened? It's true I was close behind, but my nag's not the creature that he rides. I'd ha' done as much for you as I could; but then he did it, and made no promises; so fall to, and give me a shoulder here, while I lift the lad into your wagon. The ladies can sit on one side, and we can lay him in the bottom; he's only swooned, and won't know anything about it, and it's only two miles we've got to go."

"Two miles!" exclaimed the traveller; "is it only two miles to the ferry?"

"Ferry! Why, what do you want with the ferry?" demanded Rawlins.

"I must cross the ferry to-night," returned the other.

"You can't—you shan't! by all the powers, you shan't! You shall carry the lad in your wagon to Billy Badger's, which is only two miles off, and it will be quite dark by the time we git there, for you'll have to go slow on account of the lad's hurts. After that, if you are so cursed hard-hearted, old gentleman, as to set off without waiting to know how the man is that resked his life to save yours and your daughter's, not to say nothing about your cash, which must be pretty considerable, to bring these robbers about you—"

"You mistake—you mistake, my friend!" was the hasty interruption of the traveller, "I have but little money with me—precious little—nothing to speak of."

"Tell that to the chickens—the old fowls won't believe you. But that's neither here nor there. As for your crossing the ferry this night, that's impossible. Where would you have been—or what, let me ask you, would you have had to cross with, if the lad hadn't put in to save you? If you don't choose to do the thing willingly, by the powers, I'll do it for you! I'll take possession of your carry-all, and fix the thing to my own liking."

"Oh! my father, why will you resist—why oppose any longer?" was the pleading inquiry of the elder maiden, whose own solicitations, though before chiefly whispered, as if in deference to her father's years and feelings, were as warm in expression, and as humane in their purport, as were those of the more abrupt and sturdy woodman. "The gentleman says rightly," continued the maiden; "we have all been saved by the valor of his companion, and we must see him carried safely to his dwelling. Nay, more, we can not leave him till he is out of danger."

"Virginia, my child, what is it that you say? You know not my reasons—my necessity," was the bewildered response of the father.

"Nothing, my father, but absolute danger can justify inhumanity." She laid down this just principle with due solemnity.

"I am in danger," whispered the father in her ear—"foes seek—evils beset—dangers follow me."

"God forbid! say not so!—your life—how?—from what?"

—from whom?—speak to me, dear father! Tell me all—now, now. Let me know wherefore this journey—why have you left your home—our dear home—in this strange and sudden manner?”

The anxiety of the maiden almost overturned her caution. Her whispers became full and perfect sounds at the close, and were silenced in much agitation by the father, who pointed to Rawlins, now approaching with the body of Vernon, which he had lifted upon his massive shoulders, and was bearing to the carriage. The groan of the father was insuppressible.

“Not now, my child, not now. We must submit to this. Take your seat; Ellen will sit on the front with me. The stranger speaks truly. It might have been, but for the youth’s coming, that we had lost that which is of more value than life,”

The parties were soon seated, and the cushions of the vehicle were made to support, in tolerable ease, the form of the wounded man, from whom an occasional escaping groan announced the lingering presence of life within him. Having effected all the arrangements, to his own satisfaction at least, Rawlins took charge of Vernon’s horse, which he led; and congratulating the old man upon his slowly-recovered humanity, he proceeded to guide them to the dwelling which he had assigned for their temporary lodging-house, leaving the dead robber to the possible care of his comrades.

“By the powers! old gentleman,” said he, with an air of great toleration, as he rode up beside the vehicle, and looked in upon the face of his companion, “it was only because of the young ladies that I let you off so easily. When you wanted to back out, and leave the lad in his blood, when he had just done getting you out of a mighty ugly scrape, I had it in my mind to make you walk your own trotters, and take the wagon to myself altogether; for, you see, it would have been mighty shameful in you to go off in safety, not asking and not caring what became of him that helped you. If you had seen him ride as I did, when he heard the screams of the ladies, and seen his face when he spoke, and heard his words when he cried to me that was riding close behind him, ‘A woman’s voice, Rawlins!’—Rawlins is my name, sir—you would say to yourself, ‘By the powers! this is the very sort of man to wrap up in your

heart, and to love,' and I love him, stranger, by the powers!—I love the lad for what I've seen him do to-day, jist the same as if I know'd him for a hundred years, though I never set eyes on him afore to-day."

"He is a stranger, then, in this neighborhood?" was the inquiry of the old gentleman.

"A traveller, like yourself; he comes from below—I reckon from some of the old states, for he's got a sight of l'arning, knows everything, and talks jist like a book."

The eyes of the elder maiden were fixed for awhile with increasing interest upon the pale countenance of the wounded man, and she now remarked the finely-formed and expressive features—expressive even while overspread by a pallor such as that of death—the softness and fineness of his skin, the small, sweet mouth, and the flowing locks of hair, which escaped in small, single ringlets from the confining cap which he wore, but which had been displaced by the motion of the carriage.

The instincts of women are no less busy and prompt than those of men; else why should the maiden blush when she beheld the eyes of the woodman suddenly cast upon her, as she scanned the features of his unconscious companion? She had, with equal suddenness, arrived at the conviction that the face of the stranger youth was one of the most noble she had ever seen, and distinguished by that delicacy of feature and expression which are conjectured to denote equally aristocratic birth and natural genius. This conviction was, perhaps, strengthened by the few words which Rawlins had spoken, and which represented the youth as a traveller like themselves. Imagination soon busied itself to discover his objects, his pursuits, family, and mental resources; and even when the searching glance of the woodman compelled her to avert her eyes to the opposite side of the carriage from the wounded man, the subject was too interesting to suffer her to forego its consideration, which employed her young thoughts and virgin fancies in a manner which did not please the less because they lacked all means for arriving at any conclusion.

The carriage at length reached Zion's Hill—the name which the strongly-assured methodist had conferred upon his habitation—and yet Virginia Wilson—for Wilson was the name

given by her father, as his own, in reply to the demand of Rawlins—with a tenacity which is probably rational enough among young ladies in all such cases, had not yet exhausted her subject.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RIGHTEOUS ELDER—THE UNRIGHTEOUS SON—THE BEAGLES IN SWAMP.

Wolsey. ————— *Sir,*

For holy offices I have a time; a time
To think upon the part of business which
I bear i' the state.—*King Henry VIII.*

THE party was received very cordially, though with great solemnity, by the sober methodist. He descended from his steps to the carriage; freely welcomed the proprietor; commanded all care for the wounded man; bade his servants in attendance; had refreshments served, and though, in these respects, exhibiting the essentials of a most solid and earnest hospitality, he never yet unbent a muscle of his hard countenance, nor modulated to softness the harsh accents of a voice, stern, cold, slow, emphatic, and measuredly monotonous. He listened to the unusual narrative of their escape, with the same composure as he would have heard the complaints of his niece, Rachel, who had pricked her finger with a needle; and his congratulations of the party on their escape, were uttered with very much like the manner which he employed when saying grace before the morning meal. A matter-of-fact face received every circumstance, and requited all the wonders which he heard; and nothing in the world could be more mortifying to the enthusiastic temperament, than the repulsive and chilling expression of a countenance that seemed to be set on high, as a sort of moral scarecrow, to rebuke the intrusive passions, the fervid temperament, the glowing and impatient zeal, that burns, and swells, and bounds, and is never so angry as when 't eu-

counters the high fences which prudence sets up to restrain its roving and incursive propensities.

William Badger had no sympathy with the enthusiasm that dilates readily at every impulse. His enthusiasm was all religious; his zeal, deep, earnest, and perpetually glowing, was restrained by that decorum alone, which is the fruit of intense veneration. To speak fast, seemed to his mind to indulge in levity; to utter promptly his feelings, might be to do injustice to his own judgment, to the governing providence of God, or to the rights and interests of others. It may be added, that, with a temperament sanguine in the extreme; a mind free, full, and active; an intense self-esteem, and that disposition to sway which is, perhaps, a natural attribute of such a character, his impetuosity of disposition was simply methodized and more completely systematized and made equal from the external restraints put upon it.

"I have seen him in a roaring passion," said Rawlins to his companion, "when he didn't know what he said or did, and swore like a Mississippi boatman; and yet one word came out after another just as slowly as if he was making his morning prayer. He's a most strange man, that same Billy Badger; but he means always to do right, even when he's most wrong; and if you'll let him alone, when he's most wrong, he'll come right after a season; but I do think he'd not suffer the angel Gabriel to set him right, or show him that he was wrong, one minute before he was willing to see it for himself."

The first care of all parties was to see into the condition and render assistance to the wounded man. He was conveyed into a quiet chamber, and Badger himself attended chiefly to his hurts. An inspection of them showed him to have been wounded by two balls, both of which had fortunately struck fleshy parts of the thigh, and the swooning had been occasioned by the loss of blood, and not in consequence of any serious causes of exhaustion.

When the venerable elder had satisfied himself of these facts, he made very light, in his solemn manner, of the danger, and assured the anxious Rawlins that the youth would scarcely feel his hurts in a day or two. The balls not having lodged, but having cut the flesh in two parallel spots, some two inches apart,

it was easy to dress the wounds, which had already ceased to pour forth those free streams which, at first, had threatened to exhaust the fountains of life within him, and might have done so, but for the timely bandaging that Rawlins had made both below and above the places which were hurt.

Badger, who asked no counsel of those around him, administered a sleeping draught to the patient, which silenced the groans, at moments escaping feebly from his lips, and set him to sleep so soundly that there was but little prospect—according to the woodman—of his hearing any of the long sermon that night.

To do Mr. Wilson all manner of justice, we may say, that he showed no lack of interest in the situation of the young man. He watched beside him until Badger had declared his perfect conviction of his safety, and then left him only to quiet the becoming anxiety of another, whose solicitude in his fate, which might have seemed improper under other circumstances, found its sufficient justification in her gratitude.

Virginia Wilson felt a strange beating at her heart, and trembled with a new sentiment of pleasure, as she listened to these tidings. Was there anything singular in the fact that she retired that instant to the chamber which had been assigned herself and younger sister, and shed in secret those tears which it might have puzzled her to explain why she shed at all. Yet such was the case, and those tears, it may be added, were no less sweetly strange to her own heart, than they would have been surprising to any other not perfectly conscious of their source.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wilson and our friend Rawlins were compelled to undergo the protracted examination of the methodist, on the subject of the late adventure; the circumstances of which seemed to awaken in him no less curiosity than concern.

“Evil is abroad in the world,” he said, beginning to sermonize at the conclusion of his examination; “there is no place altogether secure from the dominion of Satan; but that here, so nigh unto Zion, where I have, for the space of two blessed years, striven to uphold the work and the worship of our heavenly Father—that sin should so boldly demean herself, seems to be as passing strange, as it is sad. But, marvel ye not, Walter

Rawlins, at what I am about to say to you ; and regard it not as unbecoming in one who preaches peace on earth and goodwill to all men, if I declare to you that we must all arise and put on the armor of strife, yea, the very armor of man, and gird upon our thighs the carnal weapons of human wrath. The traveller must not be stricken down upon the highway without summons of eternity, without warning to prepare for death in season. We must go forth in seeking for these bloody men ; we must put them to defiance ; and as they have not hearkened to our words of prayer and peace, neither have they given heed to the forbearance of our own example, then must we use against them the same weapons which they are so ready to use against the wayfaring man, and we must smite them hip and thigh to their utter undoing. If they will not hearken to the imploring angel ; if they will not heed the promise of the forgiving angel ; nor incline their hearts to the prayers of the righteous, God will commission the destroying angel, even as he has commissioned him against the Amalekite and the Assyrian of old, until there be none left to tell the story of their undeserving, and their heaped-up bones alone shall remain to declare their sudden punishment, in warning to the other tribes of evildoers which shall follow them. Truly, it grieves me, that here, within sight of the Hill of Zion, which I had thought to set apart as a spot where evil should not have foothold or countenance, such deeds should be done as shall make the traveller tremble to approach, even when he comes on the sabbath, seeking crumbs of comfort from the Lord. My heart is full of shame within me, that I should have fought the good fight with so feeble an arm, and should have gone into the battle with a spirit waxing faint in the hour when there is most need of performance. Here, Mr. Wilson, with the Lord's favor, did I pitch my tent, at a time when the land around me was in possession of the heathen, though even then decreed for the heritage of the believing. Well may I declare that it was like unto a desert, where the dews of heavenly bounty never fell, or if they fell, which were drunk up without profit to earth or heaven by the thirsty, but unimproving sands. Since that time, the heathen hath sunk away from the broad possession of the land, and hath given place to a people, which, if they be not

yet holy, ware yet better favored of God with the true lights of righteousness. "Many, I am glad to declare, have had the fountains of life to spring up within their hearts, with a streaming which shall never fail; but as thou seest, there are many still who grope in the way of darkness, and fight under the banners of the mighty sinner who first made all to sin. These robbers who have assailed, with design perchance to slay—"

The harangue which, temperately begun, promised to be of interminable dimensions, was here cut short by the interruption of one who had entered without being seen by the elder. This was his only son, Gideon, a youth of twenty years or thereabouts, whom Rawlins had already described as a "sly fellow, having something wrong about him," and one whom he did not like. The youth was a proper-looking youth enough; but his keen, quick eye, the lively play of temper about his mouth, the sudden transition of expression in his glance, his studious methodism in garb and accent, so much at variance with the natural characteristics of his countenance and manner, would have impressed a close spectator with a conviction of the perfect felicity of Rawlins's brief, but comprehensive description. He sat demurely in the seat which he had taken at entrance, immediately behind his father; his hands were clasped upon his knees, his legs drawn up, and half inclined beneath his chair, his eyes cast down upon the floor even while he spoke. His interruption arose quite as much, if the truth was known, from his impatience at a sort of exhortation, in which, whatever might be the case with the traveller, his experienced ears found little of novelty; and though, in what he said, he fancied he should gratify the *amour propre* of the veteran religionist, his aim was, perhaps simply to suppress a discourse, of which the reader has probably had quite as much as himself, and may thank him for the interruption.

"It may be, sir, that you are doing some injustice to your own labors, and to the character of the goodly neighborhood in which we live. I am of the opinion, sir, that these robbers must be strangers in these parts, the outcasts from other states and cities, men of desperate hope and fortune, who rove the country like raging lions seeking whom they shall devour, and none of whom have ever hearkened to your voice, or to the

wholesome preaching of any of God's servants. I can not think that any of those whom we are accustomed to behold at Zion's Hill, hearkening to the word, will ever be found in the evil ways of these wretched robbers."

The lurking tribute to the old man's vanity which was contained in this speech, did not do away with the impertinence of the interruption. The father, slowly and without a word, when he first heard the voice of the son, wheeled his chair about so that he might face the speaker. He heard him patiently to the end, and then answered him in grave, stern accents.

"And what know you, Gideon Badger, of the hearts of men, even though they be neighbors unto Zion's Hill? And what know you of these robbers, of whom you speak so readily, that you should venture to hope—ay, sir, I say to hope—that all or even any of those who hearken to God's word in this place, are free from the damnable leprosy of sin? There is a great presumption in thy thoughts, Gideon Badger, which should be chastened by prayer, by the prayer of an anguished spirit, that knows its own presumption, and can find no check to chasten it but that which is the free gift of God himself. When thou speakest so freely of the goodness of thy neighbors, I greatly fear thou speakest a vain thing. There are many among them whom I fear lack overmuch the becoming humility of God's servants, and need the visitation of the Savior in their secret places, before they will hold up clean hands and pure hearts in the sight of their heavenly Maker. Nay, more, Gideon Badger, it is thy practice to seek and commune with some of those of whom but little that is good may be spoken. There is that idle man who lives by taking the innocent fish that swim to and fro in the Chitta-Loosa, which, though it bears a name of the heathen, is yet no less a river of the Lord—he whom they call Weston, whose blacksmith craft were of great profit to him would he pursue it, is another of whom it were well if thou hadst less knowledge—"

Here the old man experienced another interruption, but this time from no less a person than our friend Rawlins.

"He will have no more knowledge of Weston," said the woodman, "than he has already, and that I can give you now,

since Weston was the very man who was shot down by Mr. Vernon:—he sat on top of the old gentleman, there, Mr. Wilson, with pistol out, and another loaded in his breast, when Vernon tumbled him. Here are the pistols which I took from him, here's his knife, and these knick-knacks also came out of his pocket. His carcass lies in the cross-roads at this moment, where anybody who wants, can have it for the carriage."

This revelation startled the methodist out of something of his equanimity. He half rose from his seat while Rawlins spoke, but instantly resuming it, as if conscious of improper precipitancy of movement, he sat quietly, without further motion, until the tale was finished; his eyes meanwhile wandering, with obvious anxiety in their glance, from the speaker to his son, and from him again to the speaker. When the latter had finished his statement, and thrown down upon a table the arms and other articles which he had taken from the slain robber, the old man spoke, but his voice and manner had resumed all their deliberateness.

"Walter Rawlins, this is a dreadful tale which thou tellest, and I tremble to hear it, as I can not doubt that thou tellest me the truth."

"True as gospel, Mr. Badger, if eyes don't cheat one in the business."

"Make no irreverent comparisons, young man, between such truth which thou tellest, on the authority of thy mortal sight, and that wondrous truth of the gospel which comes of the sight of God. Thy truth hath its use and its value, and I question it not, but the truth of eternity is another thing from the truth of time, and God strengthen the poor eyes that see but the one, that they be not blinded with the outer brightness and perfection of the other. Truly, I make no doubt that thou hast seen this wretched man, Weston, in the condition which thou describest, though it is a sinful scorn of God's best work on earth to leave the frame even of the wicked man to rot above the earth, a prey to the carrion birds and beasts who prowl by night for food. His burial must be seen to, his proper burial; and we shall commit him to his final resting-place, with a prayer for mercy, though cut off in the very acting of his miserable crime. Gideon Badger, Gideon Badger, my son,

give thanks to God this night that my timely warning to thee against this man severed the association between ye, else it might have ripened into an intimacy with the same sins on thy part, and may have been followed by a death to thee no less sudden than it has been to him—a death without repentance and without hope. Truly, thy tidings, Walter Rawlins, are full of terror. This is an awful visitation. In the midst of life we are in death. We know not the hour, yet we must obey the summons, however sudden. This miserable creature—well that he hath no parent to sorrow for his sudden smiting, and his unatoned sins; he hath no hope of sympathy and sorrow from us—the law of God and the law of man command us otherwise. We are called upon to exult in the death of the evildoer, to rejoice in the downfall of sin—but we must put the dead out of our sight. Earth to earth, dust to dust; and it differs not though the earth be that of the sinner. We are all sinners, even when we are best; redeemed through grace and mercy, and not because of our own righteousness. Let us go forth and put our brother in sin into the grave, with a prayer for mercy to him and to ourselves. Order you the *hands* together, Gideon Badger, and bid them provide themselves with torches. Let Timothy and Ephraim bring pick and spade, that we may not waste precious time.”

Gideon Badger went slowly to the performance of this duty, and some time elapsed before the party was in readiness. Leaving his guests in charge of his niece, Rachel, of whom the garrulous Walter Rawlins has permitted us to know something already, Mr. Badger mounted his steed, a heavy, English-built animal, sturdy, and slow, and solemn, like himself, and set forth with all the phlegmatic deliberation of manner which distinguished the ancient puritan going forth to battle. There were not wanting other matters to strengthen this similitude. He carried a pair of wide-mouthed iron horse-pistols at his saddle-bow, a pair which he had borne with him into battle when, in his younger days, he followed the banner of Andrew Jackson, among the mounted men of Coffee’s brigade, and went down from Tennessee to the fierce and close combats on the Tallapoosa. Nor did he forget to take with him on this occasion the knotted hickory, a massive club, almost of the thickness of his

wrist, which, as the supposed characteristic of a hero whom he regarded with a large degree of veneration, he had made his own inseparable companion, not simply in times of danger, but on all occasions.

"And danger," said the old methodist, defending the propriety of this practice, "is even like sin, a thing of all occasions. The man of wisdom borrows his lessons from the Christian, and goes armed and ready at all times for the enemy. There is no telling at what moment we may meet with him, nor in what shape; whether he shall appear as the wild beast of the wilderness, or as the wretched robber, seeking for your substance. Therefore, I say to you, be ye always ready."

He was attended by his son Gideon, and Walter Rawlins, both equally well-armed with himself, and followed by some six or eight negro men, his entire *force* of males, some of them bearing *lightwood* torches, and the rest, the necessary implements for breaking the mould, and preparing the place of interment. They traversed the path in silence and without interruption, but, to the astonishment of all, the dead robber was nowhere to be found. The traces of the conflict were numerous—the blood lay in clotted masses on the sand and leaves; but neither on the spot where he had been described as having fallen, nor in the immediately contiguous bushes of the forest, could they find traces of his mode of disappearance.

"How know you that his wounds were death-wounds, Walter Rawlins?" demanded the methodist. "May it not be that he hath feigned death while ye were present, having no serious hurt, and hath stolen away from the place of battle, the moment ye had all gone from sight?"

"If he did," replied Rawlins with a hearty laugh, "he was able to do with less brains than any man I ever heard tell of before. But there's no danger of that; his skull was crunched by the bullet, and a piece of it was wanting—clean blown off—as large as a table-spoon. Besides, I felt at his heart more than once, while I was searching his pockets, for I didn't want that a dead man even should open his eyes and catch me stripping him. The beat was all gone out of his breast, before I come up from chasing his brother rascals."

"Verily, Walter, thou couldst not have chased them to a

great distance, for they have surely returned to his assistance, and it is by their help that he hath been taken away."

"Like enough, sir; but I did give 'em a chase, and a mighty close one for the time I took about it. I wasn't going to run 'em fifty miles, when dark was coming on, and my company was waiting for me in the open road. Besides, there was little chance, if I didn't tree 'em at the first jump, that I should find 'em, me one only, in a close thicket like that. That canebrake would hide a hundred rascals from the most honest nose among us all."

"It needs not that we should speak longer in this idle fashion: thou hast too great a vanity of thy speech, Walter Rawlins. It is a sin in youth to multiply words, having neither experience nor thinking to make them stable and of fitting effect. Thou shouldst better prefer to hear the language of wisdom, in the counsels of age. Years must pass over thee, and thou must clothe thyself in holiest meditation, even as with a shrouding garment, which shall wrap thee in from all worldly shows and affinities, before it will be thy right, or in any wise becoming in thee, to speak freely in the presence of men, or confidently among their counsels. I will speak more to thee of this subject on the way homeward. Turn thy horse, therefore, which improperly crosseth the path, so that I may advance before thee. It is, perhaps, well that we are not required to perform this awful ceremony of committing dust to dust. Let the dead bury the dead; these are the written words, which truly signify that the wicked should take upon themselves the task of putting their fellow-sinners from sight. Yet, young men, the ceremony of human burial is not an unfitting spectacle for the young and erring like yourselves; and had these wretched people left us the task of committing their slain comrade to the earth, I should have striven to fill your minds with the goodly workings of religious truth. Ye should have had ample premonition of the fate of wickedness, so that your hearts might have been touched in season, and your souls warned with a righteous fear, which should have moved you in all haste to fly from the wrath which is to come. Nay, there is yet time for this, and, God willing, young men, this shall be the subject of our evening exhortation, ere we seek our rest this night."

An audible groan burst from the lips of Gideon Badger, which the father ascribed naturally enough to the solemn and sad course of meditation which his words had inspired in the breast of the youth. The less rigid mind of Walter Rawlins referred it to a more simple, and perhaps equally natural cause—the terror which such a threat as that of the father was always calculated to awaken in his own bosom, seemed quite sufficient to justify the audibly-expressed tribulation of Gideon. If he suspected the latter of a little hypocrisy, he gave him credit, at least, for a certain degree of sympathy with himself in the unfavorable estimate which he had made of the elder's solemn outpourings—the chief objection to which, in his mind, consisted in the fact that they occupied time which could be much more pleasantly disposed of, in communion with one whose discourse, if less saintly, was far more sweet, and whose periods were uttered with less elaborate lips, and closed sometimes with far more pleasant emphasis.

“But if the disappearance of this slain robber relieves us of one duty, Walter Rawlins,” continued the old man in a different strain of thought, “it seems to impress upon us the necessity of other duties, no less painful, and, perhaps, more full of trouble and danger. It is clear that the companions of this robber bear the name of legion—they are many, since they attack the traveller in troops and squadrons—they are bold, since they attack him in the broad daylight, and near unto the very foot of Zion's Hill—nor doth their boldness appear less remarkable from the fact that they have scarcely been driven from their prey, with the loss of one slain from their number, before they return to the spot and carry him away in safety. This conduct betokeneth the insolence of numbers. Doubtless, they came hither after your departure, with a force increased sufficiently to enable them to avenge their loss. The madness of wickedness would not stop even at the wanton and useless repetition of their crime. All this calleth loudly for exertion among the true peacemakers, the righteous, and well-wishing among mankind; and for the suppression of these evil-doers, the neighbors must be stirred up into activity and wrath. Rumors have reached me before this, of a gathering of evil men along this heathen river; and now, when it cometh so nearly to our own

doors, it behooveth me as a magistrate under an earthly ruler, no less than as one commissioned by the Most High, to search into this sin, with keen eyes and a sleepless spirit. Of this we must have speech and counsel to-morrow, giving our prayerful application to the Lord Jesus ere we lie down to-night, that the right wisdom may fill our understandings, so that we fall upon the fitting purpose, and take our way along the only path. Bid the *hands* follow, Gideon Badger—they loiter idly with their torches, and their voices swell into unruly sounds that are scarcely seemly in this solemn hour.”

They had scarcely gone from sight, when three men, well armed, emerged from the edge of the swamp thicket.

“By the Dog Shadow of Loosa-Chitta,” said one whose voice announced no other person than our old acquaintance, Saxon, “Badger deals in no small shot; he’s a hundred pound parson, and I shall owe him large acknowledgments when next I find it needful to become ghostly and unctuous. That Gideon is a precious rascal; he groaned most piteously, as if no river could wash the salt savor and the true leaven out of him. Yet you tell me he scampered off rather fast, Burritt?”

“Ay, as fast as two slender shanks could carry a small body and a frightened heart. We put him at the easiest business—only to hold the horses while Weston grappled the old man, and I looked for the cash. With the first sound of the enemy, he was off.”

“And had this old man any cash?”

“I’m afraid not, or he hid it too snugly for us to find it in a hurry. The watch was all I brought off, and that I pulled from the daughter’s side almost without her knowing it.”

“Well, say nothing reproachfully of Gideon; coward or not, he is of too much use to us, while his father lives, to suffer us to complain of his little deficiencies. The old man is no coward, that is clear, and would go as heartily into a fight as he goes into a sermon. He would fight like a bull-dog. The young man who gave Weston his quietus—you are sure you shot him?”

“If aim was ever good, mine was upon his breast-button.”

“Well, it is, perhaps, quite as well that it is all over. If he’s dead, it’s one out of the way that I suspect would have been

very troublesome to us; if not, as old Badger would tell you, you have not the heavier sin to answer for. But, dead or alive, it is still important that we should see what papers he carries; we must see what beagles are down in the governor's catalogue. Gideon may get these papers without much risk; and when there's no danger, there need be little fear. We must summon him to-night."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A GENUINE WOMAN AFTER A NATURAL FASHION—THE CONFERENCE BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE.

"A fair, young, modest damsel I did meet;
She seemed to all a dove, when I passed by,
And I to all a raven."—THOMAS DECKER.

THAT night, Gideon Badger encountered Rachel Morrison, his cousin, as she wandered forth into the shady grove of forest-trees, which were allowed to remain at the clearing, and conducted from the house into the garden. The youth had evidently placed himself in waiting, as he sprang from the deep shadow of an oak at her approach, and presented himself before her. She started at sight of him, with a feeling of mixed indignation and surprise. Her form, rather inclining to be tall and masculine, seemed to rise in majesty beyond its wont, the moment she recovered from her partial surprise; and the tones of her voice, and the words she used, at once indicated a condition of *quasi* warfare between them.

"Why will you still pursue, still oppress me in this manner, Gideon Badger?"

"Why will you still seek to avoid me in this manner, Rachel Morrison?" was his reply.

"If it be true that I seek to avoid you, you, as a man, should scorn to pursue me. Your own pride should preserve me from your persecution, even if your sense of generosity failed you. Will you not suffer me to pass?"

"No! not yet—not for a while! I would speak further with you, Rachel, and you must bear with my persecutions a little longer, for a very good reason."

"Let me know the reason, Gideon Badger; and if it be a good one, rest assured that I will remain and hear you without reluctance. Until then, you must forgive me if I say I hear you with little pleasure."

"I doubt not that, Rachel," returned the young man gloomily, "there is another whose speech and presence have ever given you more pleasure than mine. It is reason enough why you should remain, that you can not so easily escape, and that I am resolved that you shall hear me; and yet, I would that you were more yielding to other reasons, which are enough, not only to persuade you to stay and hear, but to do so with pleasure and content."

"I know not these, Gideon—I would that I did! Heaven knows how willingly I should incline my ears to the words of one so dear to my uncle as yourself! But you well know what better reasons I have for distrusting your speech and avoiding your company."

"By heavens, Rachel, but you do me wrong! Because of one error—one crime, if it please you so to call it—am I to forfeit all your regard, all indulgence, all hope? You know that I have broken off from all intimacy with the man Furst. From that moment when you discovered our connection, and the offence of which we were guilty, I promised you, and my promise has been kept rigidly."

"And yet, Gideon, the fate of another of your intimates alarms me—this unhappy man, Weston!"

"Rachel, Rachel! can it be that you would couple me with that robber? Can you suppose me lost to all reason, as well as to all religion? Can it be that you hold me a confederate of this unhappy wretch, when you know that I have not been seen with him for months?"

"You have!" was her stern and startling reply, to the warm and earnest asseverations of the youth, given with all the seeming unaffectedness of truth. "You have been seen with him, Gideon, within three weeks."

"Ha! who says it?—how know you?"

"Mother Kerrison saw you with him at the ferry, three weeks ago."

"Pshaw! Rachel, how anxious must you be to find out faults in me, when you fall upon such idle tales as these. For that matter, I have seen the man almost weekly every month in the past year, but we have had no intimacy, no communion 'together — we have been in no wise associated."

"Gideon, there again I must oppose the testimony of a third person to your own. Who caught those fish which you brought home with you last Saturday was a week?"

A bitter scowl passed over the countenance of the youth as he replied:—

"Truly, Rachel, you are in no lack of spies upon my actions. I suppose it will be in vain to deny that they were caught by Weston."

"It will, indeed, be vain to deny it, Gideon, and my good reasons for seeking to avoid you, arise from your having done so already. Your father was under the persuasion that you caught them by your own hands."

"I never told him so," said the young man hastily.

"No; but your words justified his belief that such was the case, and he spoke of your success in fishing to your own ears, and you did not seek to set him right."

"And I am successful in fishing, Rachel, and his compliments were just enough; as for my statement misleading him, I can only say that I never intended it should. But you know, I see, that the fish were bought from Weston."

"I know that you got them from him, but I heard that they were given to you."

"Now, in the name of all that is precious in a spy, what old woman could have told you this? — Mother Kerrison, again?"

"It was, indeed, no other."

"That old hag ought to be carted through a cane-brake, and drawn through the bog. The fish were bought with money, Rachel Morrison, and I trust there's no more harm in buying fish from a man that turns out to be a rogue, than in buying them from the best citizen in the county. That you hate me, Rachel, is sufficiently clear from the collection of authorities and arguments which you have got together against me."

"Gideon, God knows, and you ought to know, that I have had, in the kindness of your father to the poor orphan of his brother's wife, every reason to make me try to love and to esteem you; and I know, however little you may be disposed to believe it, how much I have tried to love you. But you have not suffered me to do this. Your own wilfulness, your harshness—shall I say your cold, calculating artfulness of conduct in relation to your father, myself, and others—but your father chiefly—have baffled the desires of my heart. I can not love, I can not honor you—nay, I can not look on you without shrinking and shuddering—when I know how prone you have shown yourself to speak the thing which is not, and to do the thing which you are commanded by God and man not to do. But, if these reasons were not wanting, Gideon, to make me desirous to shun you, there were others, sufficient for my justification, in your caprice and violence of temper. You have striven to use me as your plaything; you have tried to abuse my ignorance—to take advantage of me as a child; and when you have failed in this, you have railed at me in ruffianly terms, as if I, too, were a ruffian. It were conclusive against your claim to manliness, that you have pursued this course of conduct, even while I have been in your father's house, protected by his favor, and almost dependent on his bounty. Be assured, Gideon Badger, that it was in my necessity, only, that I have remained and endured this treatment in silence. I could not have done so, had the dwelling of any other relative been open to my entrance, where I might have escaped such persecution."

"Ay, ay! Rachel Morrison, this is all very strong, and very emphatic," said the youth, with mocking bitterness; "it is, as the old man, my venerable father, would call it, a searching and soul-harrowing discourse; but it may be that you have still left unspoken some of the grounds which induced your hatred of Gideon Badger."

"I hate you not, Gideon," said the maiden, mournfully. "Alas! it is my great sorrow that you will not suffer me to love you."

"Nay, nay, Rachel! these sounds do not delude me. As I was saying, some of your reasons for rating me so humbly—so

scornfully, should be the word—were unexpressed. You love another, Rachel Morrison; you love this swaggering fellow, Rawlins; deny it, if you can.”

“I seek not to deny it, Gideon.”

“It were in vain to do so. I have seen you together; your heads and hands mingling; your forms linked—ay, you may well shrink and blush while I say it, Rachel Morrison—your mutual lips glued to each other, as if they were never more destined to undergo separation.”

The maiden did blush at the description of those scenes of secret tenderness which she had fancied utterly unseen by any eyes but those of Heaven, and which, in the purity of her heart and its emotions, she had neither shame nor scruple that Heaven should behold; but when her accuser spoke of her blushes, and counselled her to shame, her lofty spirit rose in majesty, her heart swelled with the pride of innocence, her form dilated in towering beauty, and she retorted the insolence of the speaker with well-deserved scorn.

“And if I blush, Gideon Badger, at these scenes, it is not because they have been witnessed, but that such as you should have witnessed them. You, without sympathy for truth or virtue, would only mock the sincere heart by your jest, or offend it by your presence. A noble witness had gone from the spot in silence, and in his secret soul had locked up the remembrance of what his eyes had beheld unwittingly. Certainly, he would never have labored as you have done, to make a woman regret that she had yielded herself to those feelings which, while they are pure in the sight of God, should be held no less sacred in the sight of man. To Walter Rawlins I am pledged—betrothed—it needs but the sanction of religion to make us one. We are already one in spirit and in truth—with God’s blessing we shall soon be one in law.”

“Never, never!” cried the youth impetuously, with choking accents, and the fierce gesticulation of one threatening an enemy. “Hear me, Rachel Morrison, you shall never wed this man. One or both of us shall first perish. I hate him now, as I have ever hated him, but with a hatred that will no longer brood and slumber over baffled hopes, and ineffectual purposes. If you resolve as you declare, then shall my equal resolution follow

hard upon your declaration. Be sure that no peace which I can disturb shall dwell with you—no hope that I can banish shall warm your dwelling—no happiness follow your marriage with this man. Nay, there shall be no security. I will pursue you to the uttermost ends of the earth, but I will wrest you from his grasp; I will pursue him to the uttermost ends of the earth, but I will paralyze his embrace; and, if I can not triumph in love, at least I will do so in the exercise of the most despotic hate. You know what I can do—you know my powers and my passions. Beware how you drive me to desperation—beware how you compel me to hate, when you know how heartily I can love.”

“And know me also,” replied the woman with tremulous but measured and subdued accents, “know, Gideon Badger, that you can no more terrify Rachel Morrison than you can terrify the man who is pledged to be her husband. In God is my trust, and with a proper confidence in his power to save, I bid defiance to all your powers to wrong and to destroy. He hath strengthened me to bear with many afflictions, with poverty, with evil tongues—even with dangers that might have stricken and destroyed—he will sustain me in flight, he will defend me against the pursuer, even if earthly powers should not avail for my protection. Yet, let me warn you, Gideon Badger, against this evil resolution. A word from me to Walter Rawlins, and his foot were upon your neck the instant after it was spoken.”

“What! would you so soon threaten me with your bully, Rachel Morrison?—But I fear him not—”

“Enough!” she exclaimed, interrupting the further course of his insolent speech—“let us part, Gideon. You can say nothing more that can move me now.”

“Nay, Rachel—you madden me. Why provoke me thus when you know my passions?”

“Your passions shall never be *my* tyrants, Gideon Badger; and you, who know so well how to conceal them in the presence of your father, exhibit but a poor sort of manliness when you refuse to restrain them in the presence of a woman. Let us separate, since it seems impossible for you to forbear language which it gives me pain to hear. Let us separate, but not in anger. I forgive you, Gideon; and if there be one thing more

productive than another of sorrow in my heart, it is that you should so sinfully and perversely cast your good mind and better nature beneath the trampling foot of passions which first degrade and afterward destroy. Why, Gideon, why—son of my second father—why will you profligately cast away the noblest gift of God, the noble reason, and madden thus in a hopeless pursuit of that which it is beyond your power to procure?”

“Be not certain of that! It is *not* beyond my power, Rachel Morrison—once more I tell you, you shall never wed this man.”

“What mean you? Twice, Gideon, have you spoken in this strange, wild manner. Do you threaten his life or mine? Can it be that you mean to murder us?”

“Murder, indeed!” he responded with a hollow laugh. “Who said that? Not I, Rachel, not I—your fancy is at work, and upon this slender stock you will get up a pretty tale before morning. No! no! I have no design to murder. I have no idea of shedding blood; but—ha!”

The bay of the beagle arose faintly from the forest, swelled over the garden, and tremblingly fell upon their ears through the umbrageous tree-tops that sheltered them in their conference. A pause ensued, broken by neither for an instant. He then continued:—

“Enough for warning, Rachel—enough. You will think upon it and be wise. You know it is the wish of my father that you should be my wife, and my own love should move you to yield willingly to his wishes.”

“Your love, Gideon Badger! Speak of the love of the storm for the flower which it rends in its rude embrace;—speak of the love of the ocean for the poor bark which it swallows up;—speak of anything which makes a sport, a victim, of the object which it destroys, and you then speak of your love for me. Your passions, not your love, are busy in all this. It is they who would be my master, as they are your own. But they never shall. I will convince you, Gideon, though I weep for you with a sad sickness of heart all the while, that when you are most ungovernable in your rage, I can be calm and unmoved by your fury; when you are most angry, I shall be least moved; and when, to others and to yourself, you seem most fearful, then shall you behold the orphan of your father’s bounty most fear-

less and secure. I praise God that he has given me a strength of soul, which enables me, whatever may be the terror and the danger, to keep in the way which my heart tells me is right. With this consciousness, you can not affright me, you can no more drive me from my resolution, than you can persuade me from the truth."

"You speak boldly, but you know me not. The time will come when you shall know more. But not yet—not now. Hark! I hear the whistle of your lover—he is summoning you to your old place of meeting. Make the most of your time, Rachel Morrison, for, by the dim lights that look down upon your endearments, they are destined not to last."

In another instant the maiden, stunned and oppressed with painful emotions and troubling fears, found herself utterly alone. Slowly she made her way to the garden, where, in a little time, she was joined by her lover. Gideon Badger, meanwhile, leaping the little worm-fence that ran along the lower limits of the enclosure, was lost from view in the forest, where his own voice, a moment after the woods had enshrouded him, might have been heard in responsive echoes to those mysterious bayings of the beagle which had summoned him to a meeting of his confederates.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RIGID MAGISTRATE—HOW TO BADGER BEAGLES AND SNARE FOXES.

"Gentlemen have you provided me here half-a-dozen sufficient men?"

SHAKSPERE.

WITH the dawn of the day following, the traveller, Wilson, with his two daughters, prepared to resume their journey. The impatience of this gentleman seemed to grow with each moment of delay, and the protracted exhortations of the hospitable methodist, who proved no less liberal of his counsel than he had shown himself of his meat, contributed to heat his impatience into fever. Still, though perhaps rather from the promptings of his eldest daughter than the instigations of his own heart, he

took some pains to assure himself of the favorable condition of the young man who had been wounded in succoring him ; and did not resolve upon his journey, or, at least, did not commence his visible preparations for it, until he learned from the sober report of Badger, and the no less credible but less solemn statements of Rawlins, that Vernon's hurts were not such as could detain him more than a day in his chamber. This ascertained, he bade adieu to Zion's Hill and his friendly entertainers, and by the time the sun had fairly purpled the green tops of the forest, he was speeding fast along the by-road which conducted to Badger's, and which he had taken the night before with so much unwillingness, and so little grace.

It was some hours after his departure, before Vernon awakened from the deep sleep into which he had been thrown by the opiate which had been given him the night before. Nor could he be said to have awakened to perfect consciousness, because he awakened to the light. The stupifying effect of the laudanum benumbed his energies, and seemed to confuse his faculties of thought and observation. A sort of dreamy consciousness of what had taken place, in which all things floated incoherently and indistinctly before his mental vision, disturbed the certainty of his conceptions ; and it was only by the aid of Rawlins, who sat beside his couch when his eyes opened, that he recovered the knowledge of the events which had taken place the afternoon before. The stiffness of his wounded limb, and a trembling and slightly sore sensation about the spots which were hurt, confirmed so much of the particulars as related to his own interest in the conflict ; and, gradually he was reminded of other circumstances, which it seemed to him no less important that he should know.

He had an indistinct recollection of a bright vision of beauty which had hung for a few moments above his eyes—a vision such as had been vouchsafed him more than once before, in a dream no less sweet and inspiriting, though scarcely so distinct as that which had been more recent. Then came the passing consciousness that had possessed him in the moment when he swooned away, of his having found the person of the escaping criminal whom he sought on the part of his benefactor. With this returning conviction, his faculties grew more assured and

industrious, and, cautiously concealing his great interest in the issue of his inquiry, he proceeded to examine his companion on the subject of the party rescued.

This examination tended somewhat to confirm the impression which he had received the evening before, that William Maitland actually stood before him, in the person of the man whom he had rescued; the description of his person, as given him by Rawlins, strengthened this belief. The mere difference of name was a small and trivial obstacle, and one readily overcome by a reference to the ease with which a name might be changed, where the party was unknown; and the obvious policy of one flying from justice, to effect this change in order to avoid detection. The greater objection to his conviction lay in the two daughters, by whom Wilson was accompanied. The elder was already a woman grown—the other, nearly in her teens, and the description of Carter had led him to expect mere children in the daughters of Maitland.

This difficulty, however, upon reflection, seemed, to the sanguine mind of Vernon, scarcely less trivial than that of the name. Carter spoke of the children as he had known them, and probably with some reference to his own greater age; and as Vernon threw back his thoughts to the period when Maitland practised his treachery upon his friend, and married Ellen Taylor, the probabilities gained strength, as he found that, allowing them to have had children within a reasonable space of time after marriage, those children might very well be sixteen or seventeen, the apparent age of the eldest daughter of the traveller. But if this conclusion gave him pleasure in one respect, as it satisfied him that the means of retrieving the fortunes and the credit of his patron were almost in his grasp, he, singularly enough, felt some reluctance to pursue them, when he thought of the misery and disgrace which exposure of the father would bring upon the lovely woman, his daughter, whose first glance had so impressed itself upon his fancy.

The matter would have seemed easy enough to provide for the children, as such, who, at the tender years of childhood, could not well have been conscious of the shame which would necessarily follow the detection of the father. But the case became wonderfully different and difficult when the child was a woman

—and such a woman—having, without doubt sensibilities keen and quickening, such as are proper to her sex; and a consciousness of shame corresponding with that intelligence, which, without any other knowledge than lay in his own endowing fancy, he assumed must belong to such lovely and speaking features, as those which looked down upon him in his moments of lapsing consciousness. How could he pursue, without relenting, the father of such a woman? how could he, as the stern minister of justice—in fact, the sheriff's agent, with a special power to place fetters upon his limbs—how could he drag that old man, felon though he was, from the presence of that daughter? He felt that she would rise between him and his victim—the rebuking, the imploring, the preserving angel; that her tears would be his reproach; her sorrows, his sentence of condemnation; and he felt, even then, that her hate to the oppressor of her father, would be a something beyond his best ability to bear. But when, on the other hand, he thought of Carter—his patron, his only father—the sterner commands of duty—the earnest voice of soliciting gratitude—spoke another language to his better judgment.

“I must do my duty,” he murmured to himself as he strove feebly to rise from the couch; “it must be done. Rawlins, my good fellow, help me to put myself in trim, for I feel very stiff and stupid. I must get up: I must see this gentleman.”

“What gentleman?” said Rawlins.

“Mr. Wilson; the gentleman we helped yesterday. Did you not tell me that he came with us—that he brought me here?”

“Ay, but he cleared out by sunrise this morning. He was in a monstrous hurry to be off, and would have gone before daylight, if 'twasn't for that angel creature, his daughter. She told him mighty plain that 'twouldn't do for them to go till they know'd that you were safe.”

“Ha! Did she say that?”

“I heard her with my own ears, though she didn't know I was nigh. I was coming in at the entry-door leading to the shed, and her back was to me all the time. She said a good deal more which I couldn't make out, but I understood enough to see that she was blaming him for his hard-hearted way of

making thanks for the help he got from us—not to speak of my help in the business, for it was mostly yours. Yet she didn't leave me out, she spoke to me herself about it, and told me how her father owed everything to us, and how I must tell you this when you got better. Well, they waited, as she said they must, till Billy Badger felt your pulse, and looked at your face—and he looked long enough and felt long enough to have answered for all the sick men in Massissippi. When he told them that you'd do well enough without any more doctoring, I never saw a girl more relieved. She didn't say anything then, but tied the bonnet on her sister, and went jist as the old gentleman told her; but I saw a big drop in her eyes as she was going, and her last words were to me, remembering me to tell you what she said, and how sorry she was that her father's business made him hurry away, so that he couldn't say for himself how much they thanked you. She's a most notable fine girl, I'm thinking, as ever I looked upon."

Vernon derived a greater degree of gratification from this detail of his companion, than the long, rambling sentences of Rawlins were usually apt to afford him. But though he lingered over the narrative with a silent pleasure, he did not forego his purpose of rising from his couch of inactivity, and of pursuing the task which he had too deliberately and resolutely undertaken to forego without shame. The rapid haste of Wilson tended to confirm him in the belief that it was Maitland that he pursued; and when he recollected the liberal and large extent of the commission which had been entrusted to his hands, the discretion which it empowered him to exercise in the case of the absconding criminal, and the ease with which, under its indulgent privileges, he might obtain his object without any public exposure of the victim—nay, even without a revelation of the crime to the innocent daughter of the criminal—he found himself strengthened for the duty, and eager once more for its resumption. But he rose with some increase of pain. The limb which, in his quiescent state, was tolerably easy, now throbbed painfully with the weight and pressure of his frame upon it; and having, with the assistance of his friend Rawlins, reached the hall where the family were assembled, he found himself compelled to appropriate the calico-covered sofa to its whole extent,

in the hope to regain that position of quiet which he had found before in his couch.

In this effort, and while enjoying the returning ease which it brought him, he was no doubt greatly strengthened and assisted by the consoling review of his situation, and the circumstances attending it, which his ghostly landlord, in his own measured manner, presented to his mind. According to this venerable elder, his hurt was a subject of self-congratulation, which should not be suffered to escape his own commentary. He was one of those who, regarding evils as masked benefits, looked upon Vernon as particularly fortunate in the favor of Providence, and rated the extent of his good by the degree of dissatisfaction and impatience which the victim displayed beneath it. Having exhausted all the proverbial forms of biblical and mere moral expression on the subject, he proceeded to a display of his own experience; and, if his judgment might have been regarded as equally valuable with his faith, it would have appeared convincing enough to his hearers that he had never yet suffered an affliction which had not in its ultimate consequences been a real blessing, infinitely beyond any other which, in its absence, might have fallen to his lot.

His voluminous history, fortunately for Vernon, had its own interest, apart from the savory Christian deductions which the narrator never failed to make from all its leading details; and if the youth was not greatly enlightened and strengthened in moral respects by what he heard, he was certainly edified, amused, and sometimes excited, by adventures on "field and flood," in forest and prairie, in which, like one half of the settlers of Mississippi, William Badger had proved the possession of a manly soul and strength, contending with savage beasts and forests, and not unfrequently with more savage men. But for these details, which gave action and vitality to the old man's prosing, Vernon might have made his retreat in utter desperation; but he bore it with becoming fortitude, until relieved by more exciting details, which put a stop to those of the methodist, and sent all parties to new subjects of cogitation and remark.

The dinner hour had arrived, and the family had already taken their places around the table; Rachel presiding, opposite to the uncle; on one hand, Rawlins, on the other, Gideon

Badger, as demure, while in the presence of the father, as the most worthy of the congregation. Vernon was indulged with a small table beside the sofa on which he lay, upon which was placed some thin soup and a few well-boiled fragments of chicken, such being thought the least hurtful diet for an invalid. William Badger had already commenced that interminable grace before meat, which Rawlins, after the fashion of his own wit, had styled "the dinner cooler," when a bustle was heard at the door, as of one about to enter, and the tones of a voice which Rawlins immediately recognised as that of Edward Mabry, the youth whose fight with, and pursuit of, young Horsey, has already been recorded.

"It's Edward Mabry," said Rawlins, looking up from his plate as he perceived from the pause which William Badger made in his grace, that the interruption had reached his ears. But, as if resolved that no intrusion ought to put a stop to the wholesome preliminary services in which he was engaged, with a devotedness which most persons of good appetite would have preferred paying to the dinner itself, he resumed his prayer just where it had been arrested:—

"—Thy divine countenance, O Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctify to us the food which is now before us—" and so he proceeded to the end, without further notice of the events going on around him, though, in the meanwhile, Edward Mabry, with more haste than was consistent, either with the solemn visage, rigid habits, or grave ceremony of the host, rushed into the apartment.

His audacity did not venture to go farther when he found in what manner the venerable elder was engaged; and standing apart, with hat in hand, he waited, breathless and impatient, until the grace, which seemed to expand even beyond its ordinary limits, was brought to the conclusion. The "amen" was scarcely uttered before the torrent burst its barriers.

"Mr. Badger, Mr. Badger," said the young man, "I come for a warrant—take up a villain—enough to hang him—shall do it. Must grant a warrant, and send Harvey out this very evening. Only sorry I didn't come to you before. But it's not too late—never too late to hang a rascal, and a warrant this evening will answer—a warrant to Harvey. I'm ready to swear ag'in him any moment."

"A warrant, Ned!" exclaimed Rawlins.

"A warrant!" echoed Gideon Badger, with rather more nervousness than the occasion seemed to call for; and even the usually-composed maiden, Rachel Morrison, could not forbear the like exclamation.

"A warrant!"

"Ay, a warrant!—a warrant against John Yarbers, Mr. Badger—he's a villain, a thief—he's the man that helped to run Joe Watson's horse, and I can prove that he put him in the hands of Bill Munson, the fellow that got off last month from Deputy Nichols. I'm ready to take my affidavit to it."

The methodical lips of William Badger at length parted. His face put on new terrors, his words were stern, and the tone threatening.

"Young man," he said, regarding the disfigured visage of the intruder rather than the tale which he told, "young man, you have been fighting."

The youth muttered some hasty words, in which "honor"—"impudent fellow"—"had to fight," were strangely jumbled up with other less significant syllables, but the ascetic elder cut short the worthless pretext in a fashion of his own.

"Edward Mabry, have I not repeatedly counselled you against this brutal and blackguard practice? Have I not repeatedly told you that I care not to see you in my dwelling so long as you can not forbear the rending and gouging of your neighbors."

"I come about business, Mr. Badger," said the other, sulkily; "I come about business; I come to you as a justice, I don't come as a visiter."

"And I speak to you as a justice; and had I caught you, sir, in the brutal act, I should, as a justice, have had you taken and punished; though, to be sure, you seem to have had something more than your usual share of punishment already. God has seen fit to send you a foe who could imprint on you those marks which you are but too apt to put upon the faces of others; upon faces, Edward Mabry, made after God's own blessed image. It is his image that you tear, and bruise, and gouge, with a most miserable propensity to sin. But sit you down—why stand you in waiting when the meat is sanctified and ready? Sit you down and partake with us, young man, though it grieves and

sickens me to behold you in this condition. Rachel, set a plate."

"I'm not hungry," replied the youth, with no abatement of his sullenness; for the reference which Badger had made to the superiority of his enemy, had irritated an old sore—"I'm not hungry, I thank God! Mr. Badger; since if I was, I could not sit down at a man's table when he don't wish to see me in his house."

"There is hope of you," was the cool reply of the methodist, "so long as you have the grace to thank God for anything. Sit you down, I say, whether hungry or not, and wait on those who are. As a magistrate, I will hear your statement, and take your oath, if need be, when you have dined; but I warn you, Edward Mabry, that an oath is a serious and solemn invocation; the Lord is spiritually present when it is taken; it is an awful and soul-binding, and soul-responsible assurance. Beware, then, that you swear not against your neighbor, unless with a perfect certainty, so far as the blindness of human sense and judgment may admit of certainty, that what you say is the truth. But sit you down and eat. Gideon Badger, help Edward Mabry to some of the chicken which is before you. Eat, Walter Rawlins. And so, Edward Mabry, you are certain that it was Yarbers who run the horse?"

"Caught him a-doing it, sir. But that ain't all; there's another business more serious. I have a strong notion that I can prove he's been talking insurrection stuff among the niggers."

"That is a dreadful crime, Edward Mabry, and I could wish that you spoke not such suspicions aloud, until you have strong proof of their truth. If I remember rightly, it is now near a month since Joseph Watson recovered the horse which had been stolen."

"Yes, sir; about a month."

"Ah! and you knew the fact at the time. You knew when the robbery was committed?"

"'Twas I caught Yarbers with the animal, making tracks for Vicksburg."

"And wherefore have you kept this thing hidden so long, Edward Mabry? Why have you forborne to bring this evil-

doer to punishment before this? And why is it, that, having suppressed the truth so long, you now declare it in the unbecoming language of human passion? Answer me these questions, Edward Mabry, for something of my conduct will depend upon the explanation which you may now give of yours."

These were home questions, and the effort to answer them only involved the speaker in all the meshes of a seemingly inextricable confusion. It was only by piecemeal, and after the most Socratic examination, that the keen, searching, old methodist obtained all the facts, and came to the conclusion, that, but for a quarrel between the parties, the horse-stealing, and other offences of John Yarbers, might have been buried in utter oblivion, so far as the testimony of Edward Mabry was concerned. In brief, the party was soon apprized that Mabry, whose attachment to Mary Clayton was, like most attachments of country-lovers, known to all the neighborhood, had, after fruitlessly pursuing the actor to the river without overtaking him, returned with a double feeling of wrath and mortification to his own home. From thence he had gone, early the next morning, to the house of Yarbers, and there had pressed his claim, in the absence of the latter, to the hand of his daughter-in-law. He had done this quite as much in anger as in love, being resolved to bring the matter to a close, as he found himself unable to bear the continual anxiety and passionate strifes to which his position exposed him; and he did not, in fact, believe that he was entirely wanting in attraction to the eyes of the damsel.

But he made his application at the worst possible moment. The calculating mother and uncalculating daughter had but too recently parted with the gay and attractive actor, and he met with a flat rejection from both, the terms of which, on the part of Mrs. Yarbers, were uttered in a manner nowise complimentary to the pride and vanity of the suitor.

Burning with indignation, he rushed from the house, only to encounter John Yarbers at the entrance. To him he breathed, without stint or limit, the indignation which he felt; and his rage was complete when the husband simply and civilly confessed that he had no power to alter the decision of his wife. Yarbers was rather *nonchalant* in his treatment of Mabry, for

he had just before had the assurance of the master-spirit, Saxon, that the thing should be settled in such a manner as to save him harmless; but he begged Mabry to wait awhile longer, and concluded—having a reference to some crude and half-digested plan of Saxon—by recommending that Mabry should contrive to get himself made colonel; a vacancy then existing in the regiment by the death of the late celebrated Colonel Quillinan. To the raging Mabry, this seemed little less than downright mockery; and, without further exchange of words, he put spurs to his horse, and took the road to the house of the justice of Zion's Hill. The progress of the visiter in this quarter has so far been narrated. Taking the magistrate apart, Walter Rawlins ventured to excuse Mabry's suppression of the facts so long, by taking upon himself a portion of the blame.

"As the thing's out, now, Mr. Badger, though to my thinking it had been better in for a while longer, even though John Yarbers got quite off, why, I may as well up and tell you, sir, that I advised Ned Mabry to keep the matter quiet."

"And, pray, what may have been your reasons, Walter Rawlins, for thus seeking to screen the criminal from the hands of justice?"

"Only that the hands of justice might get a good gripe when she tried for it," was the prompt reply of the woodman. Then, proceeding with some rapidity, as he saw that his further treatment of the figure was regarded with a grave countenance by the methodist, he went on to give certain reasons and facts for the policy which he had pursued.

"You must know, Mr. Badger, that there are more persons than John Yarbers concerned in this trade of horse-stealing, and it isn't the one mare of Joe Watson that's been cleared out by 'em in my time. We happen to know of many horses that's been lost to their owners, that John Yarbers found a claim in; and we sort o' concluded—me, and Tom Coleman, Jack Andrews, and Ned Mabry, here—that, as we knew all that any did know, and as that wasn't enough to clinch any but John Yarbers, that we'd say nothing for a while, and only keep a sharp look-out, and be in readiness to find out the rest. We all considered Yarbers to be a poor shoat, that only did as others told him. We had suspicions of three other men that took the

horses, after Yarbers had run 'em to the river, and carried 'em on from hand to hand, till they got 'em where they could sell 'em without danger of being known; and we thought, by keeping quiet about Yarbers, and watching him close, that we might get on a trail that would lead us to the other rascals. Yarbers don't dream, to this day, that anybody but Ned Mabry knows about his rascality. Ned caught him with the horse hobbled; and his liking for Yarbers' wife's daughter made him very willing to say nothing, till now, about the dad. He told me only because we were so friendly, and he knew I could keep a close mouth over any secret."

"You have done wrong; you should have brought this man to justice. The law is the terror to evil-doers, and they should be made to feel it! And who, Walter Rawlins, are the men of whom you have suspicions?"

"Well, squire, I can't tell you that, seeing that I've made a promise not to do so until there's a good chance to clinch 'em, and we get good witnesses. I'm sort of dubious it'll be a mighty tough business whenever the time comes."

"And what, Walter Rawlins, may be the reason of this fear?" said the magistrate, with increasing severity of tone and solemnity of look, his self-esteem being grievously disturbed by the refusal of the woodman to confide to him the extent of his knowledge.

"Because, squire, we've good reasons for thinking these rascals are backed by a great number that pass for honest men and good Christians; and up to this time, squire, we're at a loss to say which is which among our acquaintance and those that put on religion, and talk very good things at meeting. Every now and then there's a robbery, now on this, and now on the other side of the Big Black, but at all times too mighty nigh us not to make it very strange of the sort of folks that live about. There was Dick Coby robbed of his watch and all he had, coming from Benton a week ago, by two men in disguise; and there was the beating that Harvey got up by Doak's stand, about the same time, by other men in disguise, while he was on his way to sarve your warrant; then, again, this attack on the old gentleman, Mr. Wilson, here, as I may say, in sight of Zion's Hill why, squire, you can't shut your eyes to the thing. It's clear

as noonday that there's a gang of rascals that stand by each other, and ain't afraid of the worst that can be done to them. Besides, I'm somehow thinking, squire, that there's nothing you can do, or any magistrate, that they won't get wind of, in a mighty short time after you do it."

Rawlins did not confine himself to this brief array of circumstances to establish the probability of the faith that was in him. He proceeded to the detail of other events, some of which were known to the magistrate and others new; but the accumulation of facts had the effect of convincing and startling the methodist, when, one by one, as they occurred, they would have made little impression, and that of little duration, upon his mind.

"Verily, Walter Rawlins, thou hast shown me these things in stronger lights than they have come to me before. It is a shame and a discredit to me, as a magistrate under the appointment of man, and no less as an humble follower of Christ Jesus, that these things should be suffered to go on around me. It were well to get the young men together, and bestir ourselves in the examination of this swamp which is beside us; for that, according to my thought no less than thine, must be the place in which these villains harbor. How many young men canst thou muster at blowing of the horn?"

"Well, squire, I reckon there may be ten or thereabouts," returned the woodman, muttering their names over to himself, and counting upon his fingers as he spoke.

"Ten!—ten only! Why, Walter, either I lose my arithmetic, or you have never yet found yours. By what rule can you count? Instead of ten, there may be twenty, nay, thirty, mustered by the horn blowing."

"Yes, squire, but it ain't by horn-blowing that I would bring together the men for such a business as this. Some of the men that would come at horn-blowing would be more likely to help the rascals than to hurt them; and if I could tell you some of the suspicious names that I know on, you'd look green again."

"I can not say, Walter Rawlins, that I altogether understand you when you speak of my looking green again; but, at all events, I will look farther and immediately into this business. I will confer with this young man, Vernon, who speaks sensibly

on most subjects, and he hath shown himself bold enough to be a leader in any strife that may follow, and is surely not to be suspected of any connection with these outlaws of whom you speak. If he will go forth with us, it were something; for thou and thy ten men would go but a little way to compass all the points of the swamp, and beleaguer those who harbor therein. The canebrake were, alone, a sufficient protection. But let us seek these other youths. We have already five in this dwelling, counting myself and Gideon Badger with the rest, and I trust in God that when the hour of evil strife shall come, there will be fifty rather than ten willing to gather together for the good of the covenant."

CHAPTER XX.

THE FOXES IN COUNCIL—TERRIBLE DISCOVERY—A WOMAN'S STRENGTH.

"We are not grown so proud
As to disdain familiar conference."—MASSINGER.

RAWLINS was not altogether satisfied that the methodist should take the business so completely out of his hands, but he well knew that there was no hope of successful resistance against the usurpation. The self-esteem of William Badger was well-sustained by the firm rigidity of his character, and the perfect unconsciousness of anything like presumption in the lead which he was resolved to take. The woodman shrugged his shoulders, therefore, and said nothing; congratulating himself that he had kept the suspected names to himself, and inly determining to continue his own plans, which, though less dignified and imposing than those of the senior, yet promised to be, for that very reason, far more effective. He followed the squire into the *salle à manger*, where the young men had been left, and where he found them busily engaged in the discussion of sundry subjects, all of which were necessarily made to give way to that which was always the most important to William

Badger—that, namely, which most interested himself. The latter proceeded, as if from his own knowledge and thought—for he made no sort of reference to Rawlins in the progress of his narrative—to give the substance of what he had heard, to describe the evil condition of the neighborhood, and to expatiate upon the necessity of gathering the young men together for the purpose of routing the evildoers.

Vernon heard him with a degree of pleasure and interest which he found it not so easy to suppress; but he regarded the young Badger with eyes of too much keenness and suspicion to suffer his real sentiments to be known. Without hesitation, he joined issue with the venerable elder, as well on the propriety as the necessity of the course he proposed to pursue; deliberately questioning the correctness of the assumption, that there was any number of men engaged in the outlawry which had troubled the neighborhood; and insisting upon the strong probability of all the detailed offences having been committed by the same two or three individuals who had been conspicuous in each. Much of his argument was founded upon the broad, patriotic text, that in a country like ours, where the means of life are so readily and universally to be obtained, it was morally impossible that any numerous set of men could be found, wilfully disregarding the laws and making themselves liable to their penalties.

His views were supported at large, and with much more earnestness, by Gideon Badger, who took especial care to wind up his notions of the subject, by an elaborate eulogy upon the moral and religious influences which had been exercised over the neighborhood by the burning and shining light fixed upon Zion's Hill.

But neither the well-tempered courtesy with which Vernon had spoken, nor the closing and rather bald flattery of Gideon's speech, saved them from the charge of vaingloriousness and presumption from the venerable elder, who was never more full of Christian texts than when he was following his own mind, and resolved upon making others do so likewise.

Having adopted the notions of Rawlins as his own, he was as rigid in their maintenance as he ever could have been in that of a favorite text. He went into a history of all the rob-

beries and murders in the county and in the neighboring counties for the ten previous years; connected them together by a supposititious train of circumstances, ascribed them all to the same set of men, and concluded by declaring, that "the time was at length come for the punishment of the offenders; that the vengeance of God was at length ripe; that the sword was unsheathed to smite, and sharpened for destruction, and that he"—though this was rather left to the implication of the hearers—"was the appointed messenger of wrath, who was at once to denounce the judgment and carry it into execution." His resolution to obey the commission which had been given him, was followed by a direct demand on Vernon's services, to assist in carrying out his purposes, which he resolved to begin forthwith.

"Impossible, Mr. Badger, impossible!" was the reply of Vernon. "I am not the master of my own time, and can delay no longer than is absolutely necessary. I must pursue my journey to-morrow, and should have resumed it to-day, but that my thigh felt too sore and stiff to justify the attempt to ride so soon after my hurts."

"Young man, would you fly from your duty?" demanded the other with solemnity.

"No, sir, it is in the performance of my duties that I would fly so soon from your hospitable dwelling. I have occasions which command my haste and attention elsewhere; and I propose to leave you, at the rise of to-morrow's dawn, with the view to their performance."

The elder was not to be gainsayed, and he showed himself as tenacious on the present, as upon most other occasions.

"There can be no call so urgent, young man, as that of our country; no duty so clearly necessary as the detection and punishment of crime."

"You forget, Mr. Badger," replied Vernon, availing himself of his own expressed opinions rather than those which he really felt; "you forget, Mr. Badger, that I take a different view of these facts from yourself; that I see not the same dangers, and do not recognise the same necessity; but, even were it otherwise, I see not how I could assist you materially, and acknowledge the presence of other, and as you may think them, selfish

obligations, which compel me elsewhere. Should it occur that I may do anything to promote your wishes, I believe that I may safely assure you that you should not find me wanting."

"We must even try to carry on the good work without you," replied the other stiffly; and with this the further conference between the two ended. But the reluctance of Vernon rather stimulated than discouraged the methodist, who was always strengthened in purpose and performance by the increase of his own personal responsibilities. Having despatched a servant to summon his constable, Harvey, to his presence, he proceeded to concoct his plans for taking the outlaws, or, at least, breaking up their nest in the Loosa-Chitta swamp, with more earnestness than secresy. The arrival of Harvey enabled him to issue the warrant against Yarbers for horse-stealing, based upon the oath of Edward Mabry.

"This knocks up your affair with Mary Clayton for ever, Ned," was the consolatory remark whispered in the ears of the lover by his friend Rawlins, as the warrant was given to the constable.

"Well, I know it—I don't care a d—n; I'll make him sweat for his impudence, though it makes me lose everything."

Harvey, who was a stout fellow, of a bold heart and well-tried honesty, was made a party to the further deliberations on the subject of the outlaws of the neighborhood, and so much time was consumed in the discussions of projects and difficulties, that night came on ere he was permitted to depart for the purpose of arresting Yarbers. This duty was therefore deferred to the ensuing morning; but that very night, a trusty messenger conveyed the tidings of his danger to the horse-thief, who left a warm nest but nothing in it, to reward the industry of the constable, who returned to the magistrate with another proof added to the many commented on by Rawlins, that there was some secret and sinister influence continually busy to find out his designs, and defeat his warrants. Yarbers, who was neither worse nor better than a squatter, before daylight the next morning, was speeding on with bag and baggage, wife and daughter, to a place of hiding well known to all the beagles in the swamp.

But Vernon, though he refrained from yielding himself to the importunities of Badger, had no such indifference to his project

nor did he entertain those doubts of the necessity of proceeding against the outlaws which he yet professed. In his chamber that night, alone with Rawlins, he declared himself more fully.

"I agree with you, Rawlins, in my doubts of the integrity of this youth, Gideon Badger, and I have as little faith in the judgment of his father. The one would wilfully and dishonestly betray—the other would commit the same fault through the mere love of display and authority. I am pleased at the reserve which you have shown, and will requite it by a degree of confidence which must move you to increased reserve. What I do and say to you, must, of all things, be most studiously kept from this old man and his son; and, indeed, whatever you propose to do in the case of these robbers, must be also withheld, if you hope to be successful in your projects. Your passionate friend, Mabry, too, should have none of your confidence in such matters, for, though honest enough, he lacks all discretion, and would blow us in the first gust of phrensy that happened to seize upon him. See to that door—I heard footsteps—I speak for your ears only."

This done, and assured that there was none to hear but Rawlins, Vernon proceeded to inform the astounded woodman of those facts in the history of the mystic brotherhood, and the flight of Clem Foster from Alabama, and his probable presence in the neighborhood, all of which had been gathered by him in his interview with the governor of Mississippi. We forbear the long detail, so unnecessary to us, and avoid repetition of the still longer conversation which ensued between the two in reference to the subject, and the proper course to be pursued by Rawlins in the management of the game before him. Vernon studiously counselled the other to forbear taking any active part in the affair, until events had more completely developed the persons, the aims, and the particular whereabouts of the outlaws. In all circumstances he especially counselled the sturdy woodman—who already regarded him as an oracle—while using the influence of William Badger, on no account to admit his privy to any plan which he might deem it advisable to pursue.

"It may be that I shall be able to assist you in person before many days. My present hope is to accomplish the urgent busi-

ness upon which I shall set forth to-morrow, in time to fulfil the partial promise which I made, on leaving Raymond, to the governor. But, at all events, I will provide you with authority for your own action, which will strengthen your power, and confirm your influence over your neighbors. Here is a commission, with his excellency's signature, which makes you a captain over such a body of men as you may gather together willing to obey your command. Here, further, is a small list of suspected persons. To none of these should you extend your trust. Some of the persons, perhaps, may be among your acquaintance, and it would be advisable, however well you may esteem them, to maintain toward them the utmost reserve respecting all your plans. I will write to his excellency to-night, under an assumed name, and leave the letter with you, to despatch from the nearest postoffice. The address will be one already agreed upon between us, and he will give you further instructions—perhaps send to you a special messenger—as George Jenkinson. You will answer to the name for a time, since it would be unsafe to address you by your own. I will also give you another letter to a friend, which you will oblige me by despatching by the same post as that which takes my letter to the governor. There are other matters upon which I will reflect before sleeping to-night, which will, perhaps, enable us to correspond while apart, and play this difficult game with some good prospects of success. For the present, let us separate, that there may be no suspicions of the confidence between us."

That night Vernon prepared his letters for the governor, and his friend and patron, Carter. To the former he detailed such a portion of his adventures, and his brief experience at Zion's Hill, as would enable him to form an idea of the material he had to depend upon in the issue which, it was obvious enough, was approaching fast between the outlaws and the government. The merits of Walter Rawlins were set forth in proper language, and a list of names, which had been furnished by the worthy woodman, of persons to be relied on, was included in the letter. To Carter he wrote a more comprehensive epistle, in which his fortunes from the moment of their separation were described at large. He did not fail to apprise him of the discovery, which he thought himself to have made, of Maitland in the person of

the traveller whom he had rescued from the robbers. His hurt, slight as it was, was spoken of even more slightly than it deserved; and he declared his ability and intention to renew his pursuit on the morning following. His language was full of hope and light-heartedness, his tone being studiously assumed to encourage his friend and patron. But it might have been remarked that though Vernon spoke freely and fully of all other matters, he yet found, on finishing the letter, that he had said not a word on the subject of the two daughters—or, rather, the one daughter of Maitland who accompanied him. He was reminded, on reperusing the epistle, to say something to supply this omission in the form of a postscript, but finding that he had not room to say much, he adopted the satisfactory determination to say nothing; and so his labors closed for the night.

While the conference was going on between Vernon and Rawlins, Gideon Badger was making his way to the woods, where he found Saxon, Jones, and another of the confederates. To them he narrated the discussion which had taken place, under his father's lead, between the assembled company at Zion's Hill.

"This fellow, Mabry," said Saxon, "will not sleep soundly until he's knocked on the head. We must send Yarbers off, for it won't do to kick up a bobbery on his account. Mack," he continued, addressing the confederate hitherto unnamed, "take horse instantly for Yarbers—tell him what's going on, and say from me, that we can do nothing for him just now. Let him make tracks for Bear Garden before day peeps."

To hear was to obey. The fellow was off in the twinkling of an eye, and Saxon continued thus:—

"What the devil shall we do to quiet your father, Gideon? I am puzzled what to do with him."

"Knock him on the head, too," was the answer of Jones, "if it's only to help Gideon to a little that he ought to have, and rescue him from the strait jacket of methodism. Lord! Saxon, it's the most funny thing in the world, to see the pompous old parson, his round, red face looking forth from his white neck-cloth, and half fenced in by his high shoulders and black cape, like a terrapin on a wet log, meditating the ways and means for a Sunday dinner, and Gideon, meek as a mouse in the corner

of a trap that has baffled all his efforts at escape, patiently resigned to what is coming.—an evening prayer and sermon three hours long, church measure—cursing in his heart, all the while, that sort of heavenly unction which keeps him in a stew worse than any ever known in hell. I have peeped in once when I went to look after Gideon, and once was enough. After that I never went nigher than the garden fence, and there I gave the signal. That sermon was quite enough to keep off any beagle of any stomach, and sure am I, that the old man had better begin to hunt us with a full mouth, such as he had that day, than with a six-pounder. We could dodge the shot, but that sermon would be sure to reach us wherever we might skulk. For my part, let me be safe hidden in a hollow, and put Billy Badger near by, well wound up for a long run, he'd be sure to drive me out. I must stop my ears, or let my heels go, for stand him ten minutes I neither could nor would, for all that head or heels might be worth. I'm clear, the shortest and best way for all parties is to knock him on the head with Mabry. We have good reason for thinking that Gideon would never take up preaching as a trade, certainly he can not give us such prayers as his father; and so the sooner the old man is gathered, the better for the goodly seed which he leaves behind him."

Gideon who was one of those goodly rogues that like to keep up appearances even in situations where hypocrisy seems to be the last thing necessary, growled out something in reply to this, of an angry savor; but Jones knew his man and answered:—

"Tut, tut, Gideon, you waste breath. You know as well as I, that were the Lord in his mercy—to use the goodly phraseology of Zion's Hill—to summon to his keeping the blessed head thereof, it would be a call more grateful to his devout and affectionate son Gideon, than any his ears ever heard."

"Enough, Jones," said the more considerate Saxen, "this talk, which Gideon may suppose you to utter earnestly, brings us no nigher to our object. Of course you should never think of doing hurt or harm to any of the family of one who belongs to, and acts with us, unless it became absolutely necessary to his and to our interests. The only course which seems clear to me if the old man gets up his squad, which he will find it hard

work to do, is that we must skulk and run for it. That he can neither find nor trouble us, is sufficiently certain. Gideon, alone, as one of his band, will give us all intelligence; and there is Cotton, Saunders, Furst, Mason, Wilkes, and others, whom he will no doubt muster with him, and who will tell us just when and where the cat will jump, so that we may leave the nest empty. We must leave you, Jones, to receive notice from Gideon, whom you can see nightly, of anything that may be determined on, and this intelligence you must send by the quickest beagle you can call up, so that we may know at Cane Castle and Bear Garden what to look for and when. What you tell me of this young fellow, Vernon, is the most surprising of all. Can it be that I am mistaken in the man? Is it possible that he is only going for private business? But what business? It may be the location of Yazoo lands; he may be another of the mad fools who dream nothing but pre-emptions, and fancy they are playing the great game to themselves, while all the rest of the world is gaping and looking on. You say you searched his baggage and found no papers?"

"None. I emptied his portmanteau while he slept on the sofa in the hall, and found nothing but a few changes of linen, a vest, some handkerchiefs, and half a dozen stockings. There was neither letter nor writing."

"Did you open the stockings?"

"No! I didn't think of that."

"Ah! that was half doing the business only. But you say that he not only objected to going with your father, but doubted the truth of his conjectures."

"Made light of it—nay, laughed at it; and concluded by declaring his intention to resume his own journey upward by to-morrow's sun."

"I must meet with him. I must look into him myself," said Saxon. "I will join him on the road, to-morrow, and he will be a keen lawyer, indeed, if I do not probe his depth, and find out his secrets. It may be that I am deceived, yet the circumstances are all strong and strange. He may have laughed at the governor's fears as he laughed at Badger's; and yet, after all, it may have been a private speculation only. Would I could have heard that conversation; but regret is useless. We

must make up in skill the deficiencies of fortune, and make ingenuity do that which necessity requires to be done. If I do not sound him thoroughly to-morrow we must call Justice Naws to our assistance."

Much of this was spoken soliloquizingly; and was, possibly, beyond the immediate comprehension of his comrades. At its close, Gideon Badger asked:—

"Did you suffer the old man, Wilson, to get off?"

"Yes:—your blundering the day before, and the death of Weston, persuaded me that it was proper for us to do so, at least in this neighborhood. I set a hound on his track, however, so that we may know where he earths, and what course he takes. If he has anything, we can easily cover him before he touches the Tennessee line. But enough with you to-night, Gideon. A dog will bark at the foot of the garden at noon to-morrow—let him know what the old man has done, or is about to do. Good night."

The confederates separated; Saxon and his companion, Jones, sinking into the deep woods beyond the garden, and Gideon Badger leaping the fence, and taking a shorter way to the house.

They had fully gone from sight and hearing—ten minutes had been allowed to elapse after their absence—when Rachel Morrison emerged from the cowering attitude in which she had crouched and found concealment in a thick body of young plum saplings, brier, and shrub shoots, that skirted the spot where the conspirators had carried on their conference, and in which she had heard every syllable that had been uttered. Her cheeks were pale, very pale, when she came forth from her place of concealment; her form trembled with the crowding and conflicting emotions of her soul; but her resolution, which had brought her to the spot, and had kept her firm, and above any of those apprehensions which afflict most women, was still as strong and unyielding as at first. Sick at heart, and sad, with a bitter sadness, she was yet glad that she had so far conquered her womanly fears—the scruples of a nice, and in ordinary necessities, a proper delicacy—and had listened to that cold, calculating conference of villany, in which the fate of those to whom she was linked by innumerable ties, was so intimately interested.

"It is, then, true, all true," she exclaimed, "even as Mother Kerrison assured me, and as my own fears were most ready to believe. Gideon Badger is lost—lost for ever; and my poor old uncle—so proud in himself—so confident of all around him—with such hope in his only son—what will be the pang at his heart—what the crushing and humbling misery of his soul, when he shall hear of this! And hear of it he must. Even if my lips remain closed upon the subject, the truth will reach his ears at last. There must come the hour of discovery, when all will be known; and he—God strengthen and sustain him in that dreadful hour! For me, for me, what is left now? Shall I speak of what I have seen and heard? Shall my lips declare these dreadful tidings, and my hands offer him the bitter cup of desolation? No! no! I may not—I must not. I have not the strength—not the heart for this. I must contrive other means to prevent the utter ruin of the one, and the heart-wasting desolation of the other. God of heaven—eternal and preserving Father, be with me this blessed night, and counsel me in the fitting course, which shall defeat the danger, and disarm the sting of this threatening sorrow. To thy grace and saving mercy, Lord Jesus, I commend myself, in this moment of doubt and difficulty."

Never was prayer more humble and devout, and offered with a more becoming sense and spirit, than that of Rachel Morrison kneeling among the withered leaves, in the silence of the night on the edge of that deep, dim, and mournfully-sighing forest.

CHAPTER XXI.

KEEN ENCOUNTER OF WITS—THE ROGUES ARREST THE TRUE
MAN—BATTLE OF RIVAL RACES.

"I, walking in the place where men's law-suits
Are heard and pleaded, not so much as dreaming
Of any such encounter; steps me forth
Their valiant foreman, with the words, 'I 'rest you.'
I made no more ado, but laid these paws
Close on his shoulders, tumbling him to earth."

GEORGE CHAPMAN.

THE hour was late when the strong-minded maiden, Rachel Morrison, reached her apartments. The family, guests and all, had retired to their several chambers for the night; and in the silent review which she made of the scene she had just witnessed, a most annoying conviction arose in her mind of the probable danger awaiting the young traveller, Vernon, who, she knew, had appointed to resume his journey on the morrow. She recollected the promise of one of the robbers (Saxon) to join him on the road; and this promise she naturally construed into a resolution to assail him.

To warn him of his danger was her first impulse, but how was this to be done? It was impossible that she should seek him then; it was scarcely proper, indeed, that she should seek him at any time; and to communicate her warning to Walter Rawlins—the most easy and natural mode—was to prompt his inquiries into other particulars within her knowledge, which she was not yet prepared to unfold. She dreaded the prying mind of her lover, and doubted her own strength to refuse him that information which was effectually to blast and destroy the son of her protector. The conflict in her mind kept her wakeful, and at the dawn of day she was dressed, and anxiously on the watch for that stir in the household which

might denote the preparations of the traveller. To her great joy she heard footsteps in the adjoining passage, which she knew to be those of Rawlins. She went forth and joined him.

"Walter," she said, "your friend Mr. Vernon must be on his guard while he rides. There is danger awaiting him—let him see to his arms, and be heedful of the company he meets."

"Ha! Rachel—but is this all?—know you nothing more?"

"Nothing that is of any service to him, and nothing more of his danger. The robbers are near us; they will be on the lookout for him. Counsel him to be well prepared; perhaps you may counsel him to defer his departure."

"I have tried that already, but he is bent on a push to-day. He's very restless to get off, though his thigh's mighty stiff and sore. But tell me, Rachel, how do you know all this?"

"Another time I will tell you all, not now—Gideon is stirring. Beware of him."

"Ha! Gideon—say, Rachel, what of Gideon?"

The person named, at this moment appeared in the passage-way, and the maiden was gone from sight in the next. The woodman instantly returned to the chamber of Vernon, and apprized him of what he had heard. The latter listened to him without emotion.

He looked to his pistols, felt the charge, renewed the priming, and this done, continued his preparations for departure as coolly as before. An early breakfast had been prepared, after which, and the unusually long grace which preceded it, Vernon bade adieu to his rigid, but hospitable host, and joined by Rawlins, rode forth upon his way. The latter escorted him to the river, and on their way to this point, Vernon suggested to him all those plans and precautions, by which the woodman was to conduct the contemplated operations against the robbers. The reasons for the exclusion of the old methodist and his son were necessarily increased by the significant warning of Rachel Morrison; and, counselled as well as he might be under the existing circumstances, Rawlins returned to Zion's Hill, leaving our hero to pursue his farther journey alone. The narrow, but deep and rapid stream was soon crossed, and now let us also leave him, for a brief space, while he struggles through the

rank ooze, and interminable ponds and sluices that skirt, at frequent intervals, and for continued miles on either side, the dead level borders and drowned lands of the Loosa-Chitta.

The sun was slowly ascending through the branches of the towering cottonwood and pine-trees, that seemed to throw themselves forward as barriers in opposition to his progress, along the eastern elevation, when a small party of men, three in number, might have been seen in close consultation beneath their concealing umbrage. One of these was no other than our old acquaintance, Saxon. Their horses were in hand, as if made ready for a journey; and that air of quickness, keenness, and anxiety which mingled in their manner, and contrasted strongly with the low, suppressed tones of their voices, plainly denoted some new expedition. The robbers were evidently preparing for business.

"Go you forward," said Saxon to his two companions as he leaped to the saddle, "and let Nawls get the papers in readiness. Meanwhile, I will take the road from the Benton turn-out, as soon as I am sure that our man has passed it. I know his course now, and can readily overtake him. Remember you are to act as law officers, and you must do your duty with becoming gravity. None of your swaggering and swearing, Binks; and do you, Davis, keep a dry throat. Be sure you cast no discredit on the venerable authority you are supposed to represent. It is an honor no less imposing than new, that you should be made officers of the law you have so often offended."

"Not the less worthy officers for all that," said one of the fellows. "'Set a thief to catch a thief,' is a maxim which will always give a thief employment."

"Ay, but you are to catch an honest man as usual, rascals; so that you are only pursuing an old trade. But ride on; you have no time to waste. In another hour our man will be within reach, and you shall meet us ere we get to Lucchesa. Nawls is better at running a horse than filling out a warrant, and you will need to spur him to the task. Let him waste no minutes that you can save—you, Binks, can fill up the blank and the judge can sign it. That will shorten the business to his hand, and by all calculations you should be able to tap your prisoner on his shoulder ere we gain sight of the village. Away."

“It is done,” said Binks, putting spurs to his horse and followed closely by his companion. Saxon, meanwhile, crossing the main road, sank into the opposite forests, and put himself in watch for the coming of his prey. He was not long in waiting. His calculations, the result of long experience of horse’s speed and the road, were nearly correct. Before the hour was ended, the trampling of a steed was heard, and Vernon went by. Suffering some moments to elapse, the better to deceive the traveller as to his late proximity, Saxon at length followed and joined him a few hundred yards above.

With the first sound of approaching footsteps, Vernon prepared himself for an enemy, but the sight of the stranger somewhat disarmed his apprehensions. Saxon was seemingly without arms of any kind, and there was that in the frank and manly expression of his face, in the free, hearty salutation which he used, and the quiet and simple manner of his address, that Vernon, as a mere physiognomist—had he annexed any importance to this comparatively idle study—no *study* is wholly idle—would have been disposed rather to confide in the newcomer, than to regard him with distrust. He answered the salutation of the stranger with equal frankness, and it was agreed, as they both aimed for Lucchesa, that they should ride on their way together. This is not a matter of difficult arrangement in a country of such lonesome distances and long miles as ours; and where the parties are young, and where they have already had any experience in travelling, there is a very general flexibility of temper, which prompts them to great social compliances when upon the road. But, with the present parties, a mutual policy would alone have brought them together; and each aiming at concealment, the frank game was the only one to be played by those who had any occult objects in reserve. Something, too, in the really excellent capacities and good education of the two, may have contributed to bring them more readily together; and each perceiving in the other a nearer approximation to those standards of taste which were most agreeable to himself, and which were something above those presented by the ordinary intellects of forest life, the dialogue grew lively after a brief space of time, and soon became unflagging.

"A few years more, sir," said Saxon, in reply to a remark of Vernon, touching the sparse settlements along the Yazoo; "a few years more, and this country must become exceedingly populous. Its resources must be found out, as they are so greatly desirable to the poor settler everywhere. The wildness of the region will keep back the cold, the slow, the timid, and the wealthy. They will shrink from a too close neighborhood with the Indians, and, perhaps, be equally apprehensive of that wild class, the squatters, who, rude, rash, violent and reckless as they are, are yet the necessary men in all new countries. These will continue to be wild, until they have made some valuable acquisitions. It is the possession of something to lose, that makes your social and best citizen, and the robber himself, when his accumulations become valuable, will, I doubt not, settle down into the sober citizen, and grow grave and great among the first moralists of the land."

"If a more sudden elevation does not anticipate such slow results," said Vernon with a smile; "but," he continued, "I have no faith in half the monstrous robber-tales which are told of every new country. When you reach the scene of the story, the terrible and frequently bloody event is placed in a region yet farther off. The border is always beyond you; the country of the monsters—the anthropophagi—

"Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire—

is still the country of the unknown. You approach, and the cloud disperses, and that which, 'afar off seen,' was terrible, not only becomes harmless when at hand, but lovely and inviting, perhaps, beyond all other prospects. A certain distance 'lends enchantment to the view,' while an uncertain distance clothes it with evil aspects, fills it with

———"All prodigious things,
Abominable, unutterable and worse
Than fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived."

In short, ignorance makes as many monsters as fear, nay, it makes fear;—and mankind for ages have shrunk from the possession of the garden spots of earth, through dread of those multiplied terrors which have been made to guard them, simply through the ministry of their own imaginations."

Saxon concurred with Vernon in his brief and natural view of the subject, and the conversation proceeded with a mutually-increasing interest on both sides. The former spoke with fluency, and a considerable knowledge of the plain, the positive, and practical. Like qualities of mind were observable in his companion, but warmed and elevated by a quick and vigorous imagination, which heightened the color of his fancy, gave life to his delineations, and kindled his enthusiasm. This warmth suffered a check, and he himself received a warning, however, as he found the conversation, on the part of Saxon, gradually rising into a strain of complimentary remark, as the latter either felt, or affected to feel, the eloquence and wisdom of his companion's sentiments. The quick, sensitive mind of Vernon, which, like that of most ambitious men, had an instinctive dread of ridicule, was at once checked in its familiarity, and sunk back upon its caution and self-esteem for defence and protection. A cold, merely respectful and civil tone and form of expression, succeeded to the glow and energy of his previous manner; and Saxon, with that keen eye which belongs to the tactician, beheld the change, and readily comprehended its origin.

His own manner was also changed accordingly; his speech more qualified and cautious; and though he took care that in what he said the easy deference of his opinions should convey a no less flattering testimony to his companion's merits, he yet forbore any of those more open expressions of approval which he had imprudently administered *ad nauseam*.

But the nice sense of moral delicacy once startled, it was not so easy for him to overcome the reluctance of Vernon to engage in any new freedom of dialogue. Not that the conversation flagged between them; the frankness alone was gone; the playful indifference of expression had passed away; and though speech was no less ready than before, yet caution watched the utterance, and truth was content to show herself only at the staid and squared portals of opinion.

With some dexterity, Saxon contrived to reopen the topic which had suggested itself to them at their first meeting—that, namely, which arose naturally from the wild and equivocal character of the country, and its evil influence over the sup-

posed physical resources of the soil. It was an easy transition, which the outlaw did not feel at all scrupulous to make, to the frequent robberies and misdemeanors in the neighborhood. He spoke of them, as all spoke of them, as frequent, and sometimes coupled with greater crimes; but, at the same time, seizing upon an expressed opinion of Vernon, he declared them to be infamously exaggerated, and deplored the evils to the country of such an unhappy notoriety as belonged to it.

"It is, in fact, in the absence of citizens that these things happen. Our population is guiltless, I am sure, of any participation in them; and these crimes are committed by those only who make our territory a stage for their villanous performances. Had we a community sufficiently dense to act with anything like unanimity—indeed, had we any one or two men, calculated by ability and energy to take a lead, and bring our men together, nothing, I am sure, would be more easy than to put a stop to these excesses. We might soon, by lynching a few, keep the rest in order, and in good time the want of means and money would compel labor, which is all that is wanting to good morals in any country."

This was all very fairly and frankly said; the truth of the latter opinion could not well be denied; but Vernon, though suppressing everything like apparent suspicion, was yet suspicious; and once startled, he was one of those keen, restless minds, that can not be quieted short of utter confirmation on one side or the other. The mistimed complimentary speeches of Saxon still occupied his thoughts, and were productive in him of some such musings as filled the mind of the Prince of Denmark under not dissimilar circumstances. The theatrical reference which his companion employed in one part of his speech, reminded him at the same moment of his quondam friend Horsey, and the phlegmatic and indecisive Dane. Why should he flatter so poor a man as Hamlet? Such applauses to one's beard were not in ordinary use in that time and country: and however grateful to such a man as Horsey, were scarcely pleasing to him, unless it were that his companion regarded him also as one of the players just "come hither."

At all events, the effect upon Vernon was to counsel him to more caution, but to no reserve; and with this policy in view

he expressed himself very freely in accordance with the opinions of Saxon, which, indeed, happened to be precisely such as he had uttered at the council-board of old Badger—if that might be called a place of council where the chairman—as very often happens to venerable chairmen—was pretty much resolved from the beginning to have his own way. It occurred very naturally that he should relate his recent adventures on the other side of the river—so much, at least, as related to the attack of the robbers, and his own slight hurt in defence of the traveller.

“I then,” he concluded, “in a conversation with a very worthy and respectable old gentleman—a Mr. Badger, with whom I remained a brief space, in consequence of my hurt—came to this very conclusion, though in direct opposition to himself. He was for turning out the trainbands at once, and searching the swamp—a labor which, I fear, will be utterly fruitless. The same scoundrels that assailed Mr. Wilson are, I doubt not, full fifty miles off before this time.”

The keen eye of Saxon surveyed the speaker with a glance which seemed intended to penetrate his soul; but the calm, indifferent countenance of Vernon baffled the inquiry.

“This fellow,” thought the outlaw, “is either a most admirable tactician, or I have taken a very unnecessary labor. But, let the game be played out. We are now, sir,” speaking aloud, “we are now within sight of one of the prettiest little villages in this country. They call it Lucchesa—after some Italian city, I believe. We are all monstrous fond of going to Europe for names, which would be found more appropriate and quite as smooth and musical at home. But call Lucchesa by what name you will, you will admit when you see it that it is one of the sweetest spots that could be found anywhere for a village. It lies among gentle risings, which here may be called hills; and which so completely surround, as to leave it but a single opening for entrance, and that seems only to be scooped out for the purpose—a work not of nature but of art. The woods, you see, are thick—the old forests are barely trimmed to let in the daylight, as it were, and give room for the cottages. These are better built and more neatly decorated than is often the case in our country villages; washed with lime, which answers the

purpose of the best white lead for a season or more; and, peeping through the green openings here and there, they seem to be the pleasantest little temples that were ever yet raised by humility to happiness. I think I could spend my days in this little village, without ever desiring to look down on the outer side of the hills which surround it."

"You live here, then?" was the natural question of Vernon.

"Yes, I may say so," was the somewhat evasive answer; "I live here when not elsewhere. But it is not permitted us to choose our habitations any more than to choose our graves. No man can say, death shall seek me here, however much he might pray for it."

Saxon was on the verge of Badgerism, as the two entered the little and lovely, but scattered village of Lucchesa. It seemed a settlement of some fifteen or twenty families—the cottages gleaming in a broken circle from among the trees, planted without much reference to each other, but amply gaining in picturesqueness what they might have lacked in regularity. Some of these were girdled and guarded by little low white palings, that followed the hill-slopes on which they stood; some were fenced by hedges of the wild rose or the box, and among the small trees and bushes, and the bush myrtles or spreading cedars that filled up the space between, the multiflora and the perpetual rose leaped and twined even around the topmost branches. A few pale sycamores rose up majestically amid the dwarf foliage that filled the valley, and ran down the slopes, giving a staid and solemn air to a scene that otherwise presented no other aspect than one of unqualified sweetness. But one object more than all gratified the eye of the observer, in the little stream that came stealing and whispering out from the hollow in which the village stood, by the only portal that led into it, with the sly, smiling glance of the truant boy, availing himself of the opportunity and open door, to steal away from the guarded circuit, and lose himself for a while among the thick groves that had beguiled him from a distance so often and so sweetly before.

While Vernon looked round admiringly upon a scene that seemed strangely placed on the very confines of savage life, he suddenly found himself confronted by two persons, who, with

the air of men having a perfect right to his attention, demanded to know his name.

"My name, gentlemen!—my name is Vernon; but your demand is something singular. You will oblige me with your reason."

"Oh, yes, that's all fair enough; Harry, or Henry Vernon—that's right, a'n't it, sir?" said one of the men, drawing forth a paper.

"It is, sir," was the reply of Vernon, with increasing surprise, and a slight increase of color in the cheek, and that dilation of the nostril which denotes the swelling choler. Saxon, meanwhile, looked on with well-affected astonishment.

"Then, sir, if you're the man, we are commanded to arrest you, in the name of the state, for murder."

"Murder!"

"Yes, murder!—the murder of one Thomas Horsey, a young gentleman from below that you travelled with a few days past."

"Horsey dead! Can it be possible? This is the strangest matter, sir, and—but show me your warrant."

"Let us go into the tavern, Mr. Vernon," said Saxon, sympathizingly, "and you can there look more calmly into this business."

Upon this hint the party went forward, Doe and Roe taking care to environ our hero in such a manner that escape, were he disposed to try it, would have been impossible. Here, with feelings of no enviable character, Vernon examined the instrument which had been issued for his taking. He found it to be a criminal warrant, proper in its forms, and issued by one William Nawls, a regularly-acting magistrate. Had an enemy confronted our hero with intent to kill, the absolute danger would have produced less disquiet and annoyance in his mind than did the simple instrument which he perused and reperused, absolutely bewildered and confounded for the moment. That Horsey should have been murdered, however sudden and unexpected this event, was certainly far from being improbable in a neighborhood where he himself, but a few days before, had a foretaste of a similar fate awaiting him. But that *he* should be made liable for the actor's fate, and arrested for his murder,

was one of those contingencies which, a moment before, he would have regarded as too remote and ridiculous a possibility to occasion any other feeling than merriment in his mind.

"Gentlemen," he said to the constables, "I can scarce recover from my surprise at this strange accusation. Pray, on whose oath was this warrant issued? What testimony furnished the grounds for this charge?"

"Well, I read the oath, too," said one of the officers, "but if I was to be shot, I couldn't say if the man's name was Walker or Wilkins. It was one or t'other, I could safely swear, but which, there's no telling. Hows'ever, I don't reckon it makes much difference now—you can see all about it when you get before the judge."

"True, true—Justice Nawls!" Turning to the landlord, and showing the signature of the warrant—"Is this name that of a gentleman acting as a magistrate here, sir?"

"Not here, sir, but a few miles off, on the Georgeville road," was the reply of the landlord.

"A mighty good man is Judge Nawls," said one of the bystanders. "It was only last week he prayed s'archingly at Green Brier meeting, and the sperit worked in him so, that the sweat stood round his eyes jist the same as he'd been a-ploughing."

"'Twan't the sperit, Dill, 'twas only the flesh that worked so mightily," said another of the bystanders. "'Twas because he had none of the sperit that the flesh had to do so much; and I'm mighty sure Bill Nawls never found harder work at the plough in all his life, than he did at that ar' very sarmon."

"Well, and worn't it a good one, John Richards?"

"A good one! Well, I can't say what you may think it, but for myself I can say, such a sermon will never carry me very far along the narrow track. There's no getting to heaven by a preaching where there's no getting steam up; and it's a matter of small wonder that so many take the other road, and go down to the big pit, when it depends upon the sweating of Bill Nawls's flesh to keep 'em from it. But that's not to say, stranger, that Nawls ain't a good judge. He's a most onbecoming person, that'll see all sides of your case, and do you justice enough—though, to be sure, he's mighty slow, and takes a par

ticular long time to get through any writing. I've seen him take jist as long a time, now, to get round the body of an 'o,' or an 'e,' as I would to put on the tire of a great wagon-wheel, drive the nails, and swing it on the body."

The merits of Judge or Justice Nawls as a man and preacher, thus made the subject of popular disputation around him, was very little edifying to our hero; and just at this point of the dispute his eye caught, on a sudden, the glimpse of an object which, for the moment, almost caused an entire forgetfulness of the predicament in which he stood. This was no other than the carriage of Wilson—otherwise Maitland—which he beheld, denuded of its trunks and the other paraphernalia of the travellers, yet evidently occupied, as if for an evening ride, by its proprietor and his family. A mere glimpse was afforded him of this vehicle, as it rapidly passed along the common highway, and a feeling of exulting satisfaction, which had its source in mingled emotions, sprang up in his bosom. Once more the object of his pursuit seemed to be within his grasp;—he did not, it may be added, fail to perceive that the daughter of Maitland was with him still, though it never entered his thoughts, at this early stage of their acquaintance, that she, too, had become an object of his pursuit. The desire to see the latter, had, without his own consciousness, quite as much influence over him, as the feeling of duty which prompted him to secure the former; and with these desires in his mind, uttering an exclamation, he was about to rush to the entrance of the tavern, when his arm was forcibly grappled by the officers.

"Not so fast, my lark. That cock won't fight, I can tell you," exclaimed one of the constables, while a brutal burst of laughter from both, reminded him of his predicament, which the sight of the carriage of Maitland had moved him momentarily to forget.

"Unhand me, fellows, for an instant. I would see and speak to the gentleman in that carriage;" and he almost shook himself free as he spoke, while his efforts were such as to render necessary all of theirs to secure him.

"Be quiet, man, before I put a spur into you," cried one of the fellows, taking him at the same time by the collar, and putting on a threatening and insolent look, that goaded Vernon to

a degree of forgetfulness and fury, to which the sudden arrest of his previous movement had already greatly moved him.

"Dog!" he exclaimed, striking down the arm that grasped his collar, and driving his clenched fist into the fellow's face in the instant with a force that sent him to the floor, "do you think I will suffer this?"

"Help! help!" cried the second officer, "an escape! Citizens, I command you, help, help!—stop the murderer!"

"Cease howling, fool!" exclaimed Vernon, "I seek not to escape. I would speak but a moment with the owner of your carriage."

His words were disregarded; the constable clung to him with the tenacity of a bull-dog, that clings still though it may not conquer, and Vernon had already dragged him almost to the entrance, when a short, stout Irishman, who lay upon a bench in the room, and who, to this moment, had looked on the fray with the most placid indifference, now sprang to his feet, and lifting a bludgeon that had lain concealed behind him, felled Vernon to the ground with a single blow. He would have repeated the stroke, when a stranger interposed—a young Alabamian who had also just arrived in the village—and catching the lifted arm with a grasp that fixed it in its position, exclaimed:—

"Stick down, my lad! There go two hands to this bargain. What the devil sort of soul do you think you have, d—n you, to strike a man that is speechless?"

"T'under and turf, my honey! do you mane to make me your inimy?" cried the Hibernian. "Would ye be after resaving a tap on yer own pate, my honey?"

"Devil-may-care if I do, but you can't give it me, nor any lad of your inches," cried the Alabamian, who in the same moment lifted the astonished Irishman to his full height in the air, in defiance of all his struggles, and then dropped him down with as little reluctance as if he had been one of the most insensible "p'raties" of his fatherland.

"There, Patrick, what do you say to that, and be d—d to you?"

A battle to the death was nearly the consequence of this display of prowess on the part of the Alabamian, who, nowise

loath, prepared for it with the utmost *sang froid*, and answered the threats of Patrick with a swaggering and cool defiance, which denoted the most perfect confidence in himself. But it was not the policy of Saxon, who recognised a follower in Dennis O'Dougherty, to suffer it. He interposed to keep the peace, and used all the usual and effective arguments common to cases of such urgent necessity. The bar supplies the means of bringing about a pacification, quite as often as it promotes the strifes and vexations which lead to war, and the Alabamian expressed himself as clearly of opinion that the fun was quite as great to drink, as to fight, with a stout fellow.

"As for Patrick, here—"

"Dennis, if you please—Dennis O'Dougherty, of the O'Doughertys of Ballyshannon by the pit of Ballany—a family of the ouldest—there's no telling, indade, when the O'Doughertys were not a family of the ouldest."

"That accounts for your loss of strength, Mr. O'Dougherty," said the Alabamian; "if you hadn't come from so old a family, I should not have tumbled you so easily. Your great-grandfather must have been rather a stout chap in his time, and it might have given me more trouble to spring him to the ceiling. But the blood gets mighty thin going through three, or five, or seven generations, unless the bréed is crossed mighty often. Now, don't you see the advantage of being of a new family? In my state, all the men are of new families, and we've got the strength in us. Perhaps, the time will come that our children will grow weak and feeble like you, Dennis, and some chap. away from the Red River, or the Sabine—some new fellow from Texas or thereabouts—will swing the grandson of Dick Jamison just as easily as he can swing you, Dennis."

"Asily, do you say, Misther Dick Jeemison!" exclaimed Dennis; "not so asy, my honey, if the thing is to be thried agin. You had the back of me, Mr. Dick Jeemison, an' that's a rason why you should come to the front. But, shall it be for a quart, that we shall take a friendly gripe at the ribs, or will it be the shillelah, my honey?"

"Stick, fist, or hug, Dennis O'Dougherty, it's all the same to Dick Jamison. You're of too old a family, Dennis, to stand up with a young man from Alabam'; the stuff's nct in you, my

lad, and I should swallow you at a mouthful and never ask after the salt."

"Now, don't ye be after desaving yerself, my honey," replied the Irishman, somewhat astounded at the cool impudence of the Alabamian, not merely in disparaging his hitherto acknowledged powers, but in the still more remarkable disparagement of the greater merits of an old family, which, to the great horror and surprise of Dennis, were now made to give way to the claims of a young one. The almost contemptuous terms which the member of the new house employed in determining the proper precedence of the latter, uttered with so much complacency, tended still more to embitter the idea.

"Now, don't ye be after desaving yerself, Mr. Dick Jeemison, saing it was behind my back that ye overkim Dennis O'Dougherty; and don't ye be after thinking that ye can overkim him agin behind his back, when his face is turned upon ye. There's a difference, my honey, between a jontleman's face and his back, that ye'll be after belaving when ye've sane them together as I will show you mine, with a shillelah in aitch hand, and a pistol in the other, and the spirit of univarsal liberty in the sowl which will make a rivolution in your idees, Mr. Dick Jeemison, and tache you a leetle abolition of doctrine, that ye may take back with ye to Alabama."

"Abolition!" exclaimed one of the inmates of the bar.

"Abolition!" echoed another and another, and a dozen faces were peering into the face of the Hibernian at the inauspicious word.

"Who's talking abolition here?" said one.

"What blasted emissary of Arthur Tappan is it?"

"It's his own self, I do think," said a third; and the murmurs began to close with the ominous inquiry after that venerable border magistrate, Judge Lynch.

"Jontlemen!" exclaimed the Hibernian, who began to feel some misgivings that his position might be made a very awkward one, if the Alabamian should happen to take the lead against him. "Jontlemen!" said he, turning from one to the other, with an air of mingled apology and defiance, "don't be after desaving yourselves, and misconsaving Dennis O'Dougherty. I'm a jontleman by my mother's side—she was an O'Flaherty—"

"To be sure; don't you suppose, Dennis, that we know all that?" said the Alabamian; "look you, friends and fellow-citizens, we all know what Dennis means by abolition, but being an Irishman born, and of an old family that's nearly worn out, how should he be able to speak good English. He is a gentleman, as he says, by the mother's side—his mother being an O'Flaherty; and a lady by his father's side, the old gentleman being an O'Dougherty; and therefore he asks you all to join with him here in a sup of whiskey—regular Monongahela—that we may have a revolution of ideas and an abolition of distinctions. That's what Dennis means by abolition, only the poor fellow hasn't been long enough in America to speak good English. And, look you, my friends, it's not a bad notion now, I tell you, for a man whose family's almost worn out, to wish to abolish distinctions where our families are only just beginning. He'd be mighty willing to let that matter drop, and so you see he's for giving us a drop all round; so come Kitty, fill your quart and set out the sugar, and look you, friends, we'll drink to the health of Mr. Dennis O'Dougherty, who is a gentleman by his mother's side, and a lady by his father's; and may he soon recover his strength by getting into a new family."

This speech was received with loud huzzas. The explanation of the Alabamian, as it was only understood in part, was perfectly satisfactory to all parties; the countrymen around were satisfied with it, as its result was one easily swallowed and perfectly habitual; and the Hibernian, though there was much in the speech to confound his better judgment, and stagger his conception of the English he already knew, was also content to receive it without scruple as explanatory of his own ideas, simply as he found it so successful with all around, and as it relieved him from a predicament, which some recent examples had already convinced him, might have become an awkward, if not a dangerous one.

A more general diffusion of the peace principle was evident soon after the quart flagon was placed upon the counter of the publican, and the Alabamian, who was something of a wag, and no little of a democrat, was soon busy in laboring to convince Dennis that there was no greater misfortune on earth than to be the descendant of a very old family; as he proceeded to

show by every analogous case, drawn from the history of bird, beast, and reptile, that the breed must degenerate, with every successive advance after the third generation; and the only hope of an old nation was to merge itself, as soon as possible after that period, in the body and bosom of a new. The final speech of Mr. Jamison, at the moment when we propose to leave the company, may be put on record as containing a proposition of quite as much political truth as theory.

"It's in America here, Dennis, my boy, that we will preserve the English, and the Irish, and the Scotch, when, in your own country, you'll all be worked down to a mere stump of what you were. It's here, I tell you, that the English people will get a new growth, a height and a depth, a breadth and a bottom, when the old families wouldn't have one fellow among 'em fit to carry guts to a bear. This is the country, after all, to make men out of your sticks, jist the same as taking a plant from one place where it's been growing so long that it's come to nothing, and putting it into a new field where it never was before. See the difference! how it shoots up—how it spreads, and what a fine crop you get from it for the first five years—may be seven—but after that you must carry it farther off to some new opening, and begin again. If I was to do anything for you, Dennis, I'd marry you off at once to Polly Whitesides—you all know Polly Whitesides, my boys!"—A general laugh attested the success of the reference.—"I'd marry you off to Polly Whitesides, of Beattie's Bluff, and make a new family out of an old one."

"It's a lady you spake of, Mr. Dick Jeemison?"

"Ay, to be sure, a lady—what else? She's six feet in her stockings, with cheeks red as a gobbler's gills, and an arm, Dennis, that would put your thigh out of countenance!"

"J—s! and she's a lady, Mr. Jeemison?"

"And the very gal to make a new and rising family out of an old one on its last legs," was the reply.

Let us change the scene, and follow Vernon into the apartment into which he was carried at the moment when the blow from the shillelah of Dennis O'Dougherty had laid him senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER XXII.

PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY—A SNARL.

“Now we have argument
Of justice, and our very breath is law,
To speak thee dead at once.”

SHIRLEY.

WHILE the uproarious controversy was in progress between the Alabamian and his Irish opponent in the tavern-hall, Vernon, through the considerateness and care of Saxon, was conveyed to an inner apartment in a state of insensibility. The outlaw had his unexpressed objects in this disposition of the youth, and his connection with the constables readily enabled him to make such arrangements as left him in his sole custody. A public assurance which he gave them in the bar-room, that he would be answerable for the forthcoming of the prisoner whenever they might demand him, not only satisfied the worthy emissaries of the law, but won golden opinions for the outlaw from the unreflecting spectators. They did not, with a single exception, remark the strangeness of such a proceeding; nor wonder, as well they might, how it was that a stranger's assurance, and one who appeared to have been the companion of the traveller, should be taken as good security for the temporary release of the same person charged with a crime so heinous.

The more acute Alabamian saw this matter in its true light, and was not the less curious though he said nothing on the subject. As for the constables, the reader, who knows already what they are, will not be surprised at the ready complaisance which they yielded to the will of the outlaw. They were very well satisfied to exchange the tedious watch over the prisoner for the livelier bustle of the tavern-hall. There they soon joined the revellers, and gave themselves up to that perfect

recklessness of good order and morality, which, in no little degree, tended to confirm the growing suspicion in the mind of the Alabamian that there was something wrong in their proceedings.

A sudden regard for Vernon had been the fruit of the first moment of their meeting; as he saw, or fancied he saw, even through the reserve which is usually the accompaniment of superior endowments and education, a frankness of manner and character in the youth, which, while resembling, was grateful to his own.

These first loves, or favorable impressions, are very common to a forest country such as ours, where no long time is allowed for the formation of intimacies, and where the instincts of blood are always more active than the slow and cautious approaches of reason and philosophy.

He assisted, we may state, to carry the insensible form of the youth into the chamber, and having ascertained that Lucchesa was not without its physician, he despatched one of the urchins that figured at the tavern-door, to require his assistance; a task which the boy readily undertook with the tempting reward of a fip-penny piece before him. This done, Jamison returned to his controversy with the Irishman, which he made subservient to the occult purposes of inquiry which lay at the bottom of his mind. He plied the whiskey-flagon with an industry which he took pains to make appear as a consequence of his own love for the living beverage; and he soon had occasion to congratulate himself on the discovery of one or two facts which, though subordinate in importance, were yet of a character to confirm him in his suspicions.

He soon discovered, in the first place, that his Irish adversary, in one or two unwitting speeches, was an old acquaintance of the constables; and, from the modes of speech and the sort of anecdote in which the latter freely dealt, he was easily led to infer that, however honest they might be at this writing, they had certainly, at some past period not so very remote, been very exemplary *picaeroons*. That their morals were not such as should entitle them to the selection of a devout magistrate such as Judge Nawls had been described to be, was sufficiently clear from the facility with which they threw aside that starched sem-

blance of decency which they had just before put on in the assumption of a character, and in the performance of duties, far other than those to which they had been sworn. They soon forgot the commands of their leader, who was too busy elsewhere to heed their behavior, and hear their riotous uproar, as, in the person of Dennis O'Dougherty they recognised a well-known Jack Pudding of their gang; and the renewal of sundry old jokes at his expense, did more than anything besides to convey to the mind of the acute and unsuspected Alabamian, the extent and sort of intimacy which had before subsisted between them.

Their presence brought no little increase of merriment to the carousing party. The fun had been about to decline till their appearance. A renewal of mirth was the necessary consequence of the arrival of such old proficient, and the replenishing of the flagon furnished an equal supply of the pabulum so necessary for the fervor of village wit, and the otherwise costive humor of a country population.

Our friend Jamison, speaking from his soul, cried, "D—n the expense," at every hearty summons to the company to refill—a summons not less grateful than imperative, and one never to be disputed among men no less social in character than docile in obedience to the lawful authority. Leaving these good companions for a while, let us seek the chamber to which Vernon had been carried.

This was a little low shed-room containing two beds, a single chair, a broken mirror, and a couple of rude colored pictures, such as good taste was willing to take, without scruple, during the war of 1815, at the hands of patriotism. Never did native genius effect a more rascally portraiture of humanity. One of the pictures represented the battle of New Orleans; the other a scalping-scene at the massacre of Firt Mimms, on the Tensaw. In the former, Pakenham might have been seen going through the air like one of his own congrevs, as blazing red, certainly, and describing pretty much the same sort of curve when at the moment of declension. His head nearly touched his heels, and the grapeshot might have been seen just about to bury their hissing hot bodies in the gaping wounds, from which the blood was already streaming, in pretty much the same volume as

would issue from the sudden opening of a water-plug in the streets of Philadelphia. A complete display of pyrotechnics—a shower of fire—encircled him, and formed the only light, lurid and sulphurous still, which the artist permitted on the British side of the business. In this he strove hard to accomplish the *clair obscur* with the utmost practical nicety. The rest of the battle was a chaos of heads, legs, and arms; horses kicking without bodies; men running without feet; and wheeling cannon just as busy advancing and receding, though never a man was left standing at the drag-ropes. Here Imagination had done much toward the achievement of that desideratum in all her works, the vague, twilight, picturesque, and imperfect dimness, which denotes everything that is not beheld, and makes equivocal whatever is distinct.

But the amor patriæ was predominant in the display of the American lines—there all was clear, effulgent, and imposing. Still and stern, the Kentuckians and Tennesseans stood upon the terraces. Never were attitudes more perfect. Even those who knelt for the purpose of better aim, were drawn with wonderful exactitude and majesty. Here was truth. The eyes ranged the tube with a mathematical exactness. Had you taken the instruments in hand, and separated the lines between the eyes, the drop, and the British, you would have seen in an instant how certain was their defeat. Every muzzle covered its man—every bullet had its special commission; and our artist had made it a matter sufficiently clear, without reference to any dull history, that the American victory arose from no other cause than the excellent aim of the riflemen. The whole story was told at a glance; and when you recollect that the artillery was managed with similar nicety, you have no sort of difficulty in accounting for all the havoc of that bloody field. But the whole powers of the artist were concentrated around the form of the hero of that day. General Jackson was surrounded with a thousand natural glories. The sun rose over his left shoulder, and his epaulet, reflecting his light upon surrounding objects, was almost as bright, and quite as large, as himself. “Bombs bursting in air” surrounded him with halos of falling stars that became tributary, in like manner, to the awful distinctness of his face and figure. There he stood,

“Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell.”

His portrait was true, as all the portraits of very great men must be true, even when most imperfect. There were the same thin pale cheeks, the raised cheek-bones, thin compressed lips, keen eyes, high narrow forehead, and raised hair—the head, for the greater perfection of the portrait, having been left uncovered, in defiance of smoke and flame, bombs and rockets, crackers and carcasses.

But the terrors of expression in his face were the wonders of the performance. Even had the riflemen been utterly wanting to the battle, you would have seen that these were enough for the victory. There was not a wrinkle in the old warrior's brow that did not look like a two-edged sword. His mouth was pursed up to seem a *seam*—the lines forming to a common centre, the appearance of which led you to expect a sudden expansion, no less great than the undue contraction, from which triple hail and thunder were to issue. His beard, too—for the general, if the artist may be considered good authority in a particular so perfectly domestic, had not shaved for seven days—his very beard, too, like that of old Giaffar, “curled in ire,” as he waved a sword twice his own length, and pointing to Pakenham's whizzing and whirling carcass, seemed disposed to thrust it—very unnecessarily, it would seem—into the aperture made so voluminously large already by the grapeshot aforesaid.

Language fails to do justice to this terrific picture—go to Lucchesa, reader, and see for yourself. We forbear that of the massacre at Fort Mimms, in order that nothing may be anticipated. Like that of the battle, it is a painting *sui generis*. Never were scalps taken from skulls with more terrible felicity of execution than in this picture. At Raymond court-house you will see another, by the same artist, in which a muse more moral than she of history has been invoked;—Justice with her scales very properly presides over the hall of justice. It is rather awkward, indeed, that one scale should be lower than the other, but this difference simply suggests a play of the fancy, and can not subject the painter to the imputation of any serious want of discrimination. Certainly, we shall venture to incur no risk, in this brief passage, of indulging in false and superficial analysis.

Strange to say, the merits of these pictures entirely escaped the notice of Saxon. Whether he had seen them before, or, as is quite probable, entertained no taste for the fine arts—a deficiency quite too general in our country, and quite too common among all people whose habits are wandering, to make it likely that any rebuke will be of service for a hundred years to come—one thing is certain, that he never gave so much as a glance to the panels in which these gorgeous performances had been set on high. His eye and thought were upon the young man alone, who lay insensible upon the couch; and, under the pretence of restoring him to consciousness, the outlaw, so soon as all other persons had retired from the chamber, very coolly proceeded to unbutton the vest and bosom of his patient, and explore the contents of a thin gauze-like handkerchief which encircled his waist, and which he untied with the dexterity of an old proficient in all such practices, without disturbing the position of, or removing the handkerchief from, the body. A few moments sufficed to enable him to disengage from the folds of the handkerchief a small packet which lay on the right side of the youth. This he transferred with all speed to his own bosom; and, folding a newspaper in like bulk and form, he deposited it in place of the papers appropriated, retied the handkerchief, rebuttoned the shirt and vest; and all this without disturbing the wounded man, and before the arrival of the physician;—an event, however, which occurred a moment after.

Dr. Saunders was rather a clever young man, who had received a license to practise but a few months before, and was no less modest than well-informed. He examined the hurt of Vernon, with the assistance of the Alabamian, who, on the arrival of the physician, left the company without, and with the anxiety of an old friend, awaited the result. Vernon had overtasked himself. The wound in his thigh which had bled so copiously was irritated by the hard riding of the day. He had ridden rapidly in order to overtake the carriage of Wilson, and had overcome a distance of more than forty miles. The excitement following previous events, and the anticipation of those before him had also contributed to the irritation of his system; and, when arrested for so heinous an offence as that of murder, and the murder, too, of his late companion, it

is not improbable that fever would have followed his mental suffering, even without the additional injury which he received from the unmeasured blow of the Irishman. The patient's consciousness returned while the examination of the physician was going on. He started, and with an instinctive movement which betrayed the deep interest which he had at stake, he threw off the intrusive hands about him, and his own were thrust into his bosom and not withdrawn until he assured himself of the safety of the secret deposite which he had bound around his body. With anxiety and agitation heightened by fever, he turned to the two attendants, and demanded what was meant by their familiarities. The matter was soon explained, the doctor announced himself, and coming slowly to a recollection of what had taken place in the tavern, Vernon quietly submitted himself to his hands.

Meanwhile, in the possession of his prize and anxious for its examination, Saxon availed himself of the coming of the physician to retire to another apartment. There, in secret, he unfolded the packet, the contents of which had the instant effect of clouding his brow with anger, and sending the blood into his cheeks.

"It is then true—it is as I thought and feared! This is, then, only another Hurdis—another spy, self-appointed, for our destruction. He has played his game admirably, but not perfectly. Not well enough for success, but so well as to make it necessary that we should silence him for ever. It is needful for our own safety that we do this—we can spare no longer—his doom is written."

He conned the papers closely; one of which, a blank commission with the signature of Governor Runnels, he tore into fragments and flung into the fireplace. The others comprised a brief narration of his own doings, as Clem Foster in Alabama; copies of affidavits sworn to in that state, and a list of names—a copy of which had been given to Rawlins by Vernon the night before—of suspected persons in Mississippi. These called for the more serious attention of the outlaw.

"These must fly," he muttered, as he looked over, and pencilled off, a portion of the list; "the neighborhood is closely settled and will soon be too hot to hold them; but they may

stave off danger here on the Big Black for a year or two more. Still it will be as well to warn off some of the more black and crooked—fellows who can not even look honest, may well run in advance of the danger. But Cane Castle will hide all their vices, and that is as far as they need go for the present. This agent of his excellency—would he had come himself—once fairly salted, and we shall have no trouble for some time to come. There are few in Mississippi prepared to take his place, and manage his cards so cunningly as almost to blind so old a stager as myself. His game's up—and there's an end of it. Nawls will send him to Vicksburg, and the 'beagles' will take him by the way. Then follows his execution, *in terrorem*, for the benefit of our own doubtful and soft-hearted fellows in the swamp. He will die by our laws—he has assumed the toils of the spy—he incurs its dangers; and our own require that we should show no mercy. And now for a little more hypocrisy. I would know why he seeks this traveller, Wilson—and the hurry of Wilson to leave old Badger's is no less curious. I must sound him on these subjects."

With exemplary composure he proceeded to the apartment of Vernon, which was still occupied by the physician and the Alabamian, and placing himself on one side of the patient, congratulated him on his improved looks and restoration. The compliment was a very suspicious one, for, by this time, our hero felt himself seriously ill—he could not mistake the heat of his frame; the bounding quickness of his pulse; the parching thirst which assailed him; the soreness of his head; and the painful throbbing of his wounded thigh. These were evidences, even if the physician had been absent, sufficient to make him aware of his true condition.

"I thank you," he said, "but I am not better. I feel ill—, seriously ill; and this painful accusation, this troublesome arrest! So strange, so sudden and startling:—I trust, gentlemen"—looking round as he spoke—"I trust that you believe me guiltless of this crime—nay, it must be so—the officers are gone—they have been convinced of their mistake, I suppose."

"Mistake!" said Saxon, with an incredulous expression, "what mistake, Mr. Vernon?"

"Why, sir, mistake of facts or of person. Did they not

arrest me for murder—the murder of Horsey, poor fellow ?”

“Yes, sir; but if be a mistake, it is one of those mistakes that they continue obstinately to persist in. They are in the adjoining hall. It was on my pledge that you should be forthcoming that they consented to leave you in privacy until you might be recovered from your injuries.”

“I thank you, sir, again I thank you,” replied Vernon; “it is due to the kindness of your interposition, and to the attention of these gentlemen, that I should assure you that I am wholly guiltless of the crime which is charged against me—that, so far from seeking to harm the unfortunate young man, whose fate I have heard of for the first time from this proceeding, I should feel myself bound by every duty and feeling to succor and to save him. He is a wild, hairbrained, but worthy youth, whose family is good, and whose old father has treated me with kindness. That I may be suspected is, perhaps, not so strange:—we travelled together, and separated suddenly—he taking the lower road for Benton at the forks, and I the upper, which, with some delays and interruptions, has led me here. That he may have fallen a victim to some wanton assassin is, perhaps, little surprising in a neighborhood in which crime is said to be so frequent; but that I should be seriously held to answer for his death, is a matter too idle to annoy me much or make me apprehensive of its consequences. I have no sort of doubt, gentlemen, that an examination before the magistrate will result in my immediate discharge from arrest.”

The company unanimously expressed the hope that such might be the result; and Jamison loudly declared his conviction of it.

“The truth’s in your face, Mr. Vernon—I saw it from the first, and that made me so willing to give Paddy O’Rafferty or O’Dougherty, or whatever O’ it may be, an ugly hoist, for the liberty he took with you, bringing you soon to an acquaintance, all on one side, between your head and his shillelah. He’ll not do it again, I’m thinking, not while Dick Jamison is bystanding. I know well enough you’ll get out of this scrape, so cheer up, Mr. Vernon. I’ll see you out of the mire while I’ve got any footing to stand on, and when I ha’n’t, why I’ll walk the

bog with you. D——e, but I like your face, and there's no telling what I'll do and say for a fellow I like. I'll run, ride, talk, and fight for my friend; and when he's a stranger like myself in a new place, that's the very time that I can't desert him. So count upon Dick Jamison while the breath's in him."

The expressive eye of Vernon made an acknowledgment to the hearty volunteer, which his lips did not articulate; and his hand freely returned the pressure which the latter gave him as he concluded his characteristic speech. The sympathies of the stranger, however rudely expressed, were grateful to the youth in the feeling of discontent and depression which was natural to his condition; and the unstudied frankness of his utterance was only an additional proof that his sentiments came from the fellow's heart. The reflections of Vernon's mind were nowise cheering at this moment. His course, upon which he had entered with so much confidence and hope, had been attended with disasters from the beginning, produced, not through his own measures or management, but by influences entirely foreign. Pursued by Horsey and annoyed by his prying curiosity—scarcely freed from him, before suffering in an encounter into which he was forced by a sense of duty which no honorable mind could shrink from; and now, arrested and suffering for the alleged murder of the man whose presence was so perfectly unsought and so undesirable:—these continuous events seemed to hold forth auguries the most inauspicious to that adventure which had been undertaken with so much hope. The voice of kindness came to him, therefore, at the moment of his despondency, with an influence to be remembered; and he felt that he was not altogether desolate while the sturdy Alabamian was beside his couch. The truth, which was declared by his frank utterance, and denoted in the manly and not-to-be-mistaken expression of his features, won instant confidence from our hero; and remembering one of his leading objects, he thought to himself, "Here is another ally—here is another to join with me in the strifes that may follow any pursuit of this banditti."

The wounds upon Vernon's thigh were re-dressed—the irritation of the part soothed by the application of external dressings; his head, which had suffered a severe contusion, was

properly bandaged, a nostrum given intended to lessen the fever, in the attainment of which object, a vein was also opened. This done, Doctor Saunders proceeded to silence the worthy Alabamian, whose tongue was one of those habitually restless ones, which, suspended in the roof of his mouth, rather than the gap of his throat, are for ever wagging from side to side in the fruitless hope of finding a place of rest.

"We must leave our patient in quiet, gentlemen—his fever is high—his mind is not at ease, and the necessity of the case must be my apology for insisting upon his being left to himself."

"I will but say to the officers that I yield him to their custody," said Saxon, leading the way to the bar-room.

"They can not remove him," said the physician.

"That is for them to determine," was the reply of the outlaw.

"It will be an unnecessary and wanton cruelty if they do. The young man can not escape if he would. He is really too feeble. They may watch him, and be at hand, but must not intrude upon him."

"I'll be d——d if they do?" was the asseveration of the Alabamian, glad of an opportunity to use the instrument upon which, the interdict of the physician, while in the chamber of the patient, sat with a very unpleasant weight. The keen eye of Saxon surveyed him for an instant with no very pleasant expression, but he said nothing; while the other proceeded to declare that, law or no law, he would see that none but himself should approach the sick man's chamber, and "As for taking him out," he continued, "until he's willing to go himself, let me see any one try it, and if he don't bear a hickory, his mother never bore a fool."

The arrival of another party suggested, however, a new plan of arrangements. This was no other than the traveller whom Vernon had pursued—certainly, with no sort of apprehension on the part of the former, that such had been the case. Old Wilson entered with timid, trembling footsteps—a cautious tread, as if walking upon eggs—and a furtive glance thrown from side to side as the different groups of the bar-room met his eyes, which denoted either a very suspicious temper, or one strangely unused to the devil-may-care freedoms of a public tavern. As

he advanced he encountered the three persons who had just emerged from the passage-way into the public hall, and whose more respectable appearance, in garb and manner, than that of the persons generally by whom the tavern was filled, naturally prompted the visiter to address his inquiry to them.

"Gentlemen, I would like to know—sorry to stop you—but is there not a young gentleman here by the name of Vernon?"

"There is," answered Jamison, who already assumed the entire representation of his new friend.

"Can I be suffered to see and speak with him?" inquired Wilson.

"I am afraid not," replied the physician. "Mr. Vernon has suffered some serious hurts which have brought on fever. Even the noise of this bar-room is unfavorable to him in his present situation. His mind is very much excited, and inclines to wander. I would prefer that he should not be disturbed."

There was some eagerness in the expression of Wilson's face, and in his manner, as he replied:—

"I have heard of his hurts, sir, and as I partly know him, and believe him to be a worthy young man, I came to propose that he might be taken to my house, while his illness lasted. It will be more quiet than he can possibly find it here, and—"

"You, perhaps, have not heard of the accusation against him?" was the remark of Saxon.

"And what the d—l has that to do with the gentleman's offer, I'd like to know?" was the fierce demand of the Alabamian. "I'm sure nobody who knows Vernon would think him guilty of the thing after his own lips had told 'em he hadn't done it."

Jamison spoke for his new friend as sturdily as if they had been intimate a thousand years. His manner startled and somewhat aroused the outlaw. This might be seen in the kindling and flashing of his eye, and in the sudden glow that flushed his cheek; but however much he might have been moved to resent it, there were other considerations, much more strong, that counselled forbearance; and the reply of Mr. Wilson to his inquiry, interposed, as it were, between himself and the man who had shown himself so susceptible of provocation.

"I have heard of the charge to which you allude, and which, I think with the gentleman here, must be quite groundless. It was the rumor which reached me of his arrest, and of his illness, but a little time ago, by which I was informed that he was in my neighborhood; and the thought that he might be removed with advantage to my dwelling—"

"This is an offer not to be disregarded," said the physician interrupting him; "and if the officers would permit his removal—"

"Permit it—they must, and be d——d to them. Look you, men, this here prisoner of yours—he's in a d——d bad way, and will be worse, unless you let us carry him to the old gentleman's house. See you, I'll be bail for his coming whenever he's able to see the justice; or you can stay here and keep on the lookout for him, and for me too if you choose, for I won't budge till the lad gets better. What do you say, you man-catching rascals, to being civil for awhile—it'll be nothing out of your pockets, I can tell you, while Dick Jamison has anything in his."

The constables, at whose approach Mr. Wilson might have been seen to shrink with some trepidation, were not disposed to consent so readily. They hemmed and hawed awhile—muttered together as if in consultation—spoke aloud of their duties and the great risk and responsibility, and, from their delay and reluctance, were rousing up the choler of the irritable Alabamian to a new outbreak of ferocious friendship, when Saxon, to whom they looked entirely for their cue, quietly remarked:—

"It appears to me that the officers can not refuse so reasonable an arrangement. They can keep as close a watch over the prisoner at the house of Mr. Wilson as at the tavern, and the doctor's opinion that the young man can not fly in his present situation, and should be free from noise, ought to satisfy them without any other security; though, if they need any other, I'm ready to become bound in bail along with this gentleman."

"Will you?" said Jamison; "well, d—me, you're a better fellow than I thought you, after all—so give's a shake of your paw, and let there be peace between us. Well, what do you say, you sharks in fresh water, have you got your senses yet?"

"Faith, we must let the jontleman off the hook, since ye all says it," began the Irishman, when interrupted, no less by

the stern expressive looks of Saxon, than by the sudden burst of his former opponent.

"Hillo! Dennis! and what the d—l have you got to do in the business, my lad? Shut up, you little old fellow—you have no right to speak at all until you are fairly married into a new family. Get you gone to Polly Whitesides, and let her give you a brush up before you dip your oar into another's navigation."

And, with these words, the now good-humored rowdy clapped his open hand as an effectual stopper on the widely-distended jaws of the only half-sober son of St. Patrick, whose brain was just in that condition of fermentation when he could understand that he had blundered, though in what respect he did not hope to divine, until he had taken an additional supply of the "crather," or utterly freed himself from the control of that which he had already swallowed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FOREST REFUGE—GRIEFS OF GUILT—FEMININE DREAMS
—BUDDING FANCIES.

High-climbing rock—low sunless dale—
Sca—desert—what do these avail?—
Oh, take her anguish and her fears,
Into a deep recess of years."—WORDSWORTH

THE arrangement thus effected needed but the consent of the principal party to its immediate operation; and Mr. Wilson was ushered into Vernon's chamber by the ready aid of Dick Jamison. Our hero, though confused by his application as much as by certain medicines which had been administered by Doctor Saunders, was yet not insensible to the advantages in sundry respects which the contemplated removal might afford him. As an invalid, with the possible prospect before him of a protracted illness, it promised that repose and quiet which he felt would be grateful, if not necessary to his condi

tion; and when he reflected on the probability of his being able to secure the main object of his journey, in a quiet pacific manner, and by degrees which would neither startle nor offend, he could not mistake the course which he should at once adopt. But still he hesitated, nay refused;—thanked the old gentleman for his hospitality and consideration—made light of his own services previously rendered, and, though in faltering accents, declared himself utterly unwilling to transfer the cares of a sick bed, and that too of a stranger, to the household of his friendly visiter, and to the great interruption of its domestic privacy and quiet.

The nice and jealous sensibility of Harry Vernon was busy to produce this determination; and feelings which he did not then seek to analyze—which he might not at that moment have perceived—influenced his declared resolution when all the obvious reasons of his mind fought against it. He remembered the lovely daughter of the defaulter; and when he reflected that it might become necessary to expose the crime of the father, he was unwilling to incur the reproaches—the probable and perhaps well-founded hostility—of one whose favorable opinion already grew in his mind the imbodyed standard of a becoming excellence.

But the reluctance of our hero warmed the manner of the old man to something like persuasiveness—he urged many good reasons why the patient should consent—denied the inconvenience and annoyance—spoke of his own little household comforts—and, to sum up all in brief, assured him that his consent alone would make easy the minds of himself and family, since the necessity under which they labored of attending to some pressing interests had compelled them to leave their preserver on a previous occasion, with a seeming indifference to his condition which might well expose them to the charge of coldness and ingratitude.

The objections of Vernon gradually vanished when he heard from the lips of the father that such was the argument of his daughter by which he had been moved to the offer; and it needed but the reasseveration of Dr. Saunders that the removal was full of promised benefit and might promote his more speedy restoration, to induce his full consent to the arrangement.

Behold our hero then, fairly admitted as a guest in the dwelling of the man whom he pursued as a fugitive.

Two days only had passed since Mr. Wilson and his family had become occupants of the same household. They had pursued their way to this secluded and lovely spot, with direct steps, from the moment when they left the hospitable dwelling of the rigid methodist. They had reached it late in the evening of the same day, and the night was too far advanced to enable them to behold the beauties of the locality. But the cottage, though small, was neat, and furnished with a larger attention to those things which are classed under the ordinary term "comforts," than was commonly the case in a region so remote from the demands of fashionable society. Virginia Wilson beheld on all sides those little items in the shape of carpet, chimney ornament, piano and guitar, which, if they do not of themselves secure the happiness of life, at least contribute somewhat to its good humor and content. But the circumstance which chiefly satisfied her on the night of their arrival, was the improved temper and cheerfulness of her father. While on the road, he had exhibited a degree of querulousness and impatience which she had never perceived in him before the commencement of their present journey; and this temper was coupled with an air of precipitance and apprehension—a seeming distrust of all he met—a shrinking that looked like fear from all he encountered—which filled her own mind with apprehension, and made her at moments doubtful whether there was not something like mental alienation in him—a suggestion of her fear which alone seemed sufficient to account for a course of conduct and manner such as he had never shown to her before.

These had worn away in great degree from the first moment after they had set their feet on their new threshold. The natural cheerfulness of the father seemed restored. He spoke soothingly and tenderly, as if desirous to compensate his children for what they had been made to suffer in their journey; and the fond, pliant hearts of both responded to his cares, and grew glad in the return of those smiles of the parent, which are the sweetest sunshine to the devoted and dutiful child.

"Virginia, Louisa, my dear children," he exclaimed, folding them in his arms as soon as the first cares and excitements of

their arrival were over, and when they remained alone together in their little parlor, "we have reached our resting-place at last—henceforth, my dear children, this is to be your home. Lucchesa is one of the loveliest spots on the Mississippi, and I have chosen one of the sweetest spots that surround Lucchesa. Here, Virginia, your rambles will be unimpeded and always beautiful; the woods are thick and various, and filled with the sweetest flowers; and you may now pursue your study of botany with more perfect self-approbation, since you will find abundant varieties of subjects to justify your love. And you, Louisa—what will you say to these little hills when you shall see them? They will seem to your eyes, which have never seen any but the dead flats of the low country, to be little less than mountains. Your feet will tire to ascend them at first, but after a little while you will grow wild as a kid in your rambles—there will be no keeping you in."

"But, father," said the child, drawing closer to the old man, "the woods are so wild and strange they frighten me—there's a strange noise among the big pines, and when I walk among them I hear sounds that seem like the voices of spirits."

"It is the wind, my child, that shakes the trees, and murmurs when it presses against them as if vexed at being arrested. You will grow used to that, until you learn to like it, as I doubt not your sister does already. What say you, Virginia?"

A melancholy, spiritual smile, which passed over the lips and lightened in the eyes of the elder maiden for an instant, was his sufficient answer, and the father proceeded.

"Our cottage is not one of the best in Lucchesa, but it was the best that I could buy. We will improve it as we can. You will see in the daylight that it lies on the side of a little depression that we low-country people may almost call a valley. It is so low that you can only see it from the top of the hills; and the houses of Lucchesa can scarcely be seen at all from the top of ours. We have a little garden, Louisa, and you shall tend the flowers, while I raise the squashes and the potatoes and the cucumbers. Our gallery [piazza] runs round three sides of the house, the north only excepted; and though we lie in the valley, we have a sweet and extended prospect of hill-slopes on every side. The woods seem naturally to open into vistas, and

these I will improve, until the cottage shall be the centre from which a hundred avenues of sight shall diverge, and into which they shall gather from every point of the compass. But enough of plans for to-night. Louisa, your eyes grow heavy in spite of all I can tell you. Kiss me, my child, and then find out your chamber."

The child, drowsy, but still striving to be attentive, did as she was bidden. The elder sister was left alone with her father, whose mood grew less cheerful with the absence of the child, and whose manner became far less easy. For a few moments a silence that was painful to both succeeded her departure. Mr. Wilson rose from his seat and paced the room with emotions that were evidently oppressive. Twice, thrice, did his step falter and seem about to pause as he passed before his daughter, who, with head leaning upon her palm, seemed oppressed with emotions also, which, if not so exciting, were, perhaps, scarcely less oppressive than his. At length, as if overcoming a strong reluctance, the father stopped beside her, drew a chair, and taking her hand in his, addressed her as follows:—

"Virginia, my dear child, you have said nothing."

"Father, what should I say—what would you have me say?" replied the daughter, the cloudy sadness deepening on her lovely countenance.

"That you repine not—that you are satisfied—that you are happy. See you not, my child, that the same paternal love which has striven so much to make you happy before, has spared nothing here within the compass of the country's resources to supply what you may have left behind?"

"But wherefore are they left behind, my father? Wherefore have we left the home where the same pleasures, if you call them such, were already ours? Was there nothing in the old home to endear us to it—was it not endeared to us by the happy life we had led in it—was it not endeared to us by the very death of her—that beloved mother—who made so much of the happiness we have lost—whose loss made so much dearer the little we had left?"

"And was it not good reason that we should fly, my daughter, from a dwelling where we had known that loss?"

"Alas, my father, it could not have been for that reason that

you left our home—our home which death itself had seemed to sanctify. Years have passed since that cruel hour of parting, and the pang had passed away in the bitter memory of joys felt without a pang, and the assuring hope which was so cheering to us all, that she who suffered was now sainted beyond suffering. Oh, no! dearest father, my heart will not hear this reason—my mind can not receive it. There must be another cause, and that cause, my father, is one which it doubly grieves me to believe, has made whiter than ever the hair upon your forehead.”

“Virginia, my child, why will you press me thus?” cried the father, striding hastily along the floor, with his hands clasped above his eyes, as if to shut from sight the mournful and inquiring expression of her countenance.

“Because I am a child no longer,” was her reply, as, darting from her seat, she rushed toward him, and, catching one of his hands in both of hers, sunk upon her knees with a passionate manner which well accompanied the earnest and emphatic language which she employed, and which, while clinging to him, she continued to pour forth.

“Because I am a child no longer—I am a grown woman—I can both think and feel. I can surely understand the sorrows that I still must share, and if I understand, my father, may I not help to relieve them? Were my dear mother living, I should look to her for the truth when sorrow troubled and danger followed your footsteps; but in her absence I must take her place, and I implore, nay, I claim it as my right, my father—to know what grief, what threatening danger, has driven us to this wilderness, where the forests are yet almost as wild as at their birth; where we have no society, and where we see no friends.”

“And can it be for the absence of society—nay, can it be even for the loss of friends, when her father and her sister are still left her—that I hear these questions—that I witness this affliction of my daughter?” was the answer—an answer, the burden of which did not represent the real conviction in the father’s mind, but which enabled him to evade the more searching inquiries which the first portion of her speech had conveyed.

“No!” she exclaimed, rising to her feet, “as Heaven is my help and hope, dear father, I answer ‘No!’ It is not the little circle which I have left, nor the few friends for whom I had sympathy and attachment, that gives me cause of sorrow, however their loss may at moments occasion feelings of regret; nor is the wilderness into which we have wandered so uncongenial to my tastes and habits as to provoke inquietude and annoyance. I think not of these in the conviction that you are unhappy—that a secret cause of dread and danger hangs about you which makes you so often heedless of my love and indifferent to my endearments. Nay, shake not your head, my father—that smile does not deceive me. You require me to be happy, to be at ease, and find satisfaction and pleasure in the dwelling which you have found in Lucchesa, and the comforts which your customary care has gathered about us. I answer you that I will, so soon as I find that you derive pleasure and content from the same sources. Let me see you at ease, and you shall find me so; but while your brow is clouded—while your air and movements denote a secret apprehension of evil, I can not but share the cloud upon your brow, and my apprehensions grow only the greater because I can neither see nor guard against the coming of the danger which you fear. Let me know all, my father. Give me the knowledge of this mystery—for there is mystery—and rely upon me to soothe your sorrows, though I may not avert their cause. Rely upon me to share those griefs with satisfaction which now bring me nothing but terror and despondency.”

“You know not what you ask, my child!” cried the father, hoarsely. “What if I should answer? What if, foolishly persuaded by your entreaties, I should reveal the cause of my sorrows—nay, to silence you at once, what if my revelations brought you shame along with sorrow? Ha! do you shrink—do you tremble?—Would you still hear—Virginia, would you still listen to a narration of guilt, which would make your sorrow less endurable? Speak! shall I now relate what you have been so curious to hear?”

“Guilt!” exclaimed the daughter, with feeble accents and a shrinking, sinking pain. “No! no! It can not be—there is no guilt—there can be no shame. These are cruel words, my

father; do not again speak them, I implore you—forgive me, forgive me—but you were so serious just now, when you spoke, that I almost believed you. Tell me your afflictions, but tell me not that there is guilt and shame, which, indeed, I well know there can not be.

“Enough! Press me not further, Virginia,” continued the father, recovering his calmness in some degree, and, with some effort, smoothing the excited expression of those features, which, almost convulsed a moment before, had nearly convinced his daughter of the truth of the general confession he had made. “I trust that you will never know that guilt or shame could be coupled with your father’s memory and image—”

“And yet, my father, this change of name.”

She spoke with tremulous accents, and a renewal of that look of shrinking apprehensiveness which denoted the bewildered state of her judgment, warring with her feelings and desires; unwilling to believe aught that could degrade or lessen the worth of one whom she was no less bound to venerate than willing to love, and yet the mystery of whose conduct left her utterly doubtful in which direction to incline her faith.

“Policy, my daughter, need have no association with either guilt or shame,” replied the father, evasively, and by a general remark, to which there could be no exception as such. “When I tell you,” he continued, “that the assumption of another name is necessary to my present interests, you are not to imply anything dishonorable or unworthy in the change. There are motives which justify—there are reasons which make it necessary.”

“Ah, my father, but there are no reasons which should make you deny your confidence to your daughter,” was the prompt reply. She, at once, seized upon the true and only point at issue between them, which she urged with as great a degree of earnestness as became the relationship between them.

“I believe you that there are motives which require you to do this; but, surely, my dear father, you can neither deny my interest in a knowledge of these motives, nor my prudence in reserving them from exposure as carefully as yourself. Give to my love, dear father, that reliance which it has evermore given to you.”

"You ask too much, Virginia; you are yet but a child to me. There are many things which are neither becoming nor necessary for a woman to know—which, indeed, she could not know—could not understand. It is enough that this is one of them—let me hear no more of this."

"Father!"

"Nay, my child, I mean not to be stern—I would not be angry—but this is a point upon which you are too earnest—too much disposed to insist—of which you speak too frequently."

"It is only because it is a constant thought, my father—a painful thought—a doubt—a fear."

"Let it be so no longer, my child. Do you not see that I have grown cheerful since I have reached Lucchesa? You do not see me apprehensive now that we are in a place of safety."

"Safety!" was the natural exclamation. "And was the danger then so near us?"

"Nay, how can you ask, Virginia, when but three days ago we all lay at the mercy of a gang of robbers?"

A deep sigh escaped from the lips of the serious maiden, but she said nothing. She saw that her father strove to deceive her, and she forbore any further reference to a topic which he was so anxious to exclude, even at the expense of truth. He saw her conjecture and sickened as he did so; but he could say little or nothing to remove it; and conscious of his feebleness in this respect, and of the inadequacy of any art or argument, short of a frank confession, to do away with her apprehensions, he resorted to the humbler policy of seeking to divert her mind by reference to other objects. With a general knowledge of the feminine nature, in certain minor respects, such as their love for petty pleasures, he strove to engage her mind in such matters as might amuse rather than employ it. But in this, he soon perceived, from the quiet indifference of her answers, that he must fail; and tired of his task, and dissatisfied with himself, he forbore all further effort, and the lateness of the hour soon furnished a sufficient reason for their separation for the evening.

Virginia Wilson retired to her couch, but sleep was slow to

visit her that night. Her heart was too much filled with the mysterious circumstances which hung around her father—her mind too much troubled with the apprehensions which had harassed him for several preceding weeks—to suffer the velvet-footed deity to approach her without warning, and to obtain facile possession, at an early hour, of his accustomed dominion. The night waned slowly, while a thousand thoughts and conjectures, chasing each other with as much rapidity, if not with as many startling transitions, as the images that flit over the magic glass of the wizard, made her mind a populous world, where all was commotion and much was strife. She thought, with unspeakable anguish, of the reserve of her father on those circumstances, evidently momentous, which had troubled him, and still troubled him, though, under their terrors, he had sought safety in a region still wild, and still the abode of so much that was barbarous.

What were those circumstances?—and had he indeed found the safety which he admitted had been the object of his aim? These were questions that did not cease to afflict her, because she lacked all means for their solution. She could only hope and pray—she could only resolve to assume a cheerfulness which she could not feel, and to drive from her mind, by the acquisition of an early interest in the strange world to which she had been brought, that more grateful region to which she had been accustomed. This was, perhaps, the least of the mental difficulties in the way of Virginia Wilson. Hers was one of those commanding intellects that depend little upon the mere externals of society for their comforts and enjoyments—that make place and fortune subordinate considerations in an estimate of life's resources and rewards; and require peace of mind and confidence of heart in their own, and the purity of those with whom their lot is cast, rather than the praise of man or the plenty and profusion, which, to so large a portion of mankind, constitute the "be all" and the "end all" of existence. The wilderness had no terrors, but many charms; and to one who has seen quite as much of the superficial worthlessness and empty vanity of society, as of its harmony and grace, it was no difficult matter to find a charm in solitude which more than atoned for the fleeting pleasures she had lost. Under the care

of such a mind as hers, and surveyed through the medium of such sweet affections as ministered around the altars of her unselfish heart, the wilderness could soon be made to blossom as the rose. But the dread of that nameless danger which followed the footsteps of her only living parent, haunted her thoughts with a continual presence. She estimated the powers of this danger from the terrors which had possessed her father's mind, and the very failure of conjecture to answer the doubts of her constant inquiry, was of itself a source of woe, which made her misery the greater.

Still, it had never possessed her mind until the evening of her arrival in Luccesa, and until the occurrence of that conversation with her father, a portion of which is briefly reported above, that there could be any shame or disgrace in connection with the necessity which had driven him from his home. It will be remembered with what earnestness and pleading anguish she had exclaimed against the brief and passing suggestion of her father, that guilt and shame were coupled with his sorrows. This hint—though afterward evaded and denied by Mr. Wilson, when he beheld the effects upon his child, to whom he did not dare communicate the truth—yet took possession of her mind, when the silence and secrecy of her chamber left her at liberty to re-examine the subject; and when she recurred to the secret and precautionary measures which her father had taken for his flight from Orleans—the indirectness of his course—the change of name—the constant apprehensions which harassed him, making him as imbecile in resolution as they made him acute in observation—her fears, faint and shadowy at first, grew into distinctness, and acquired new bulk and body with every additional moment of reflection.

She could now, and for the first time, readily conceive the motive for flight and fear, for that startling terror which at moments enfeebled his limbs and covered him with tremors—which made his voice sound hollow in his throat—which made his eye shrink to encounter even the fond and affectionate gaze of hers; and which, in the dialogue already briefly given, had moved him to those few but incoherent expressions, convulsively uttered, which could only have found their way to the lips of one laboring under insanity or guilt. That he was not insane she

knew—that he was guilty, the fear was rapidly growing into a faith within her. But of what was he guilty? Strange to say, the difficulty became as great as ever when she reached this stage of conjecture, or conviction; and, after a vain effort, by a reconsideration of all the subjects attending his movements from Orleans, to arrive at such hypotheses of the particular crime for which he fled, as would seem reasonable to her thought, she gave up the effort in sheer exhaustion, not without a lurking dread that, in a moment of passion, he might have stricken some enemy to the ground, and forfeited his own life in atonement for that of his fellow. Not for a single instant did she fancy that he had been faithless to his public trust—that he had incurred the scorn of all good men through a miserable appetite for gold.

Still, though dismissing, as well as she might, the distresses of her father's situation from her thoughts, she found it difficult to win the slumbers that she wooed. Her mind had been too much excited by events and scenes which were new to the even and unbroken currents of her ordinary existence, to sink into quiet and leave her to repose; and the new world in which she found herself, and the circumstances, some of them exciting and startling enough, which had occurred on their journey, called for brief review. Some of these were like a dream—the flitting shadow of a disordered image, such as gathers before the eye of a drowsy fancy, and fills the mind with conflicting impressions. Yet there was one image that lay at the bottom of all others—which rose last to her survey, and lingered long after all the rest had departed—which was neither indistinct nor imperfect—which stood proudly and nobly before the eye of her imagination, and on the pure tablets of her memory—alone, unmixed with any other form or fancy—a controlling, commanding, imperial presence. This was the image of Vernon. She saw him once more as, bounding from the wood, he rushed forward without fear to the rescue of her father. She heard the clear, silvery accents of his voice, sweet, though stern, as he shouted to his companion to follow, and to the robbers as he pursued. She beheld the grace of all his movements, as, bending in the saddle, he passed the carriage at full speed in chase of the assailants, though already wounded; and a sudden

tremor was renewed at her heart, as she remembered his faint accents when he returned, and when, sinking down before her in the road, he lay unconscious—until they reached the dwelling of the methodist—a noble specimen of manly grace and beauty. Not a single feature that her eye scanned at that moment, but rose to her memory with the distinctness of life; and, with a sentiment of fluttering pleasure at her heart, strangely mingled up with that sadness which is ever the companion of devoted love, she continued to muse upon the events connected with his presence, until thought subsided into sleep, and her dreams renewed, under various aspects of pain and pleasure, the images and events which she had been last reviewing.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN INTERESTING GUEST—A LONG LETTER—OUR HERO
WARMS TO NEW ADVENTURES.

“More particulars must justify my knowledge.”—*Cymbeline*.

VIRGINIA rose the next morning with better spirits. Her “bosom’s lord” sat somewhat lightlier upon its throne. Sleep had refreshed and strengthened her, and those dreams, those sweet, vague, twilight fancies that came so commended to her heart by their association with its own, as yet unexpressed desires, had given a warmer glow to her cheek than it wore on the preceding evening. How soon youth relieves itself from the pressure and weight of most afflictions—with what elasticity it springs from the earth, and shakes off the dew and the despondency, and laughs aloud in the consciousness of a new birth, as it prepares, like the swift arising sun, to set forth on the glorious race of life. Sorrow to the young is only one of those shadows that momentarily cloud the skies. Wait but the morrow—nay, wait but a single hour—and the cloud has passed away, the sun resumes his empire of light and laughter and universal dominion; the stars sing out a fresher song of

rejoicing at the coming of the moon-browed night; and the recollection of storm passes away from the reviving spirit with the succeeding glories of every changing moment. True though it be, that memory may preserve the pain—nay, the pain itself may still lurk within the heart—and yet, it is as a memory only—there is no venom in the wound. The pure of heart sooner than any other, relieve themselves from the heavier pressure of their burdens. Like Christian in Bunyan, every additional step, advancing up the hills of virtue, diminishes the weight of that bundle which the best of us are still compelled to carry.

The cheerfulness of the maiden was increased as she found an improvement in her father's mood and bearing. He had resumed the old smiles which he was accustomed to wear in those more palmy days of the heart to all parties, when fortune smiled upon his household, and indiscretion had not as yet prepared the way for guilt. The gloomy humors, which had made contact with him for the last few weeks unpleasant, even to a daughter so dutiful as Virginia, were seemingly all dissipated; and before breakfast was well over, the resumption of old aspects in the little family, gradually had the effect of softening what was strange, and providing what was deficient, in their place of forest retreat.

The cares of the new household—the work of order—occupied the morning, and employment is a choice morality, as it promotes content. The furniture was to be arranged; the pictures to be hung; the curtains raised; the carpets laid, and a thousand little matters to be attended to, which employed all parties, and prevented that brooding gnawing thought, which is quite as frequently the growth of the body's idleness as of the mind's activity. Then, there was the little garden to be looked at, and plans were to be hit upon for disposing of its solid squares, and cutting into angles, crescents, stars and circles, its dead and uniform levels. To survey the little farm in its whole extent, was the business of an hour, and dinner-time approached with a rapidity which was unaccountable to all. After dinner the carriage was prepared for a drive about the environs of Lucchesa; and in a better mood for appreciating the beauty of rural objects than she had been for weeks before, Virginia took her seat in the airy vehicle, from which the travelling top had

been removed, and prepared, with the more easily delighted Louisa, to see all the charms of scenery of which her father's taste and previous knowledge of the region, made him a very able cicerone.

We have already afforded to the reader a brief and passing glimpse of Lucchesa, on the approach of Vernon to that lovely village. It will not surely be supposed necessary that we should endeavor to dilate upon this portion of our labors; since, with a few small and partial exceptions, most country-villages have the same general outlines. Yet, as we have said before, Lucchesa was a village among a thousand, and stood almost alone in many respects among most of the little villages of Mississippi.

The general aspects of a social settlement in countries purely agricultural, are seldom very pleasing. The proprietors of the land are better pleased to centre around themselves, on their own plantations, their resources and attractions. These persons seldom dwell in communities, and villages are, accordingly, with few exceptions, given up to such only as ply the arts of trade, and subserve, in some central spot, the wants and wishes of a populous surrounding country. As this surrounding country is thickly or sparsely settled—as it is rich or poor—will be the moral and social characteristics of the village which looks to it for support. The occupants are usually such as need has driven. They are not often natives of the neighborhood for which they toil; and until very lately, but few tradesmen were known in the southern country, who did not “hail from” New England or New York. The exceptions to this general rule were, perhaps, the blacksmith or the wheelwright. The Yankee adventurer is seldom a laborer. He is a trader, a tavernkeeper, a tailor, a pedler—he will do anything that will enable him to avoid those heavier toils that call for great muscular activity and power. He is a jobber, a contriver, a calculator, an inventor—one of that cunning class, which, like the fox, takes good care always to employ another's fingers to draw his nuts out of the fire.

It demanded brief time for our party to see the whole extent of the little settlement; and this done, as the afternoon was only half spent, the ride was prolonged by a short ramble in

the neighboring country. They had but a little while returned from this ride before they were apprized by a talkative African, who was employed as a sort of gardener, of the events which had taken place at the tavern—the arrest of Vernon—his supposed attempt to escape, and the injuries which he received from the officers in consequence.

The tale did not lose in the usual exaggerations, nor was it quite so briefly narrated as it appears in this passage. It might be easy for us to let Cudjo speak for himself, as it is so favorite a custom with so many of our authors to make the negro a conspicuous actor in their scenes; and we see no good reason why a negro who speaks better English, and wears breeches, should not be quite as decent a personage in a modern novel, as a naked Highlander. Besides, Cudjo was an actor, and his animated gestures and fitting action might be a very good lesson to many of more pretension and a less imposing color, who have greater rights, and make more use of them to the great annoyance of deliberative assemblies. He commenced his story with a serious bluster; something like the manner of a northwester in its first approaches. The restraints, self-imposed upon his manner at first, were only intended to heighten the Kean-like outbreaks toward the close. He was, according to the prevailing rules among the stage-stricken heroes, simply reserving his powers for the fifth act—and when he reached the part where he proceeded to show the conflict between Vernon and the officers—when he described their joint rush upon him, and the descending blow of the Irishman's shillelah—he did it with such terrific truth, that Virginia screamed aloud, and Mr. Wilson, grasping the arm of the negro, demanded to know if the youth was killed.

But to this question he could obtain no satisfactory answer. Cudjo knew, indeed, well enough, but like a prudent narrator, he drew the curtain over the scene at that point when the doubt was most oppressive. He knew no more—he would tell no more—but confined himself, when more particularly examined, to simple reiterations of the part into which he had studiously thrown his greatest powers; and the renewal of which no persuasion could move him to forego. He knew his strong ground, and was resolved to make the most of it; the more particularly

when he found that he had acquired, as well from the burden of his story as from his manner of telling it, a fearful interest in the eyes of his young mistress.

The agitation and alarm of Virginia Wilson were great, but natural enough; and while her father stood looking with equal surprise and indecision upon the reiterated gestures of the slave, which were made to supply those breaks in his story where his language was imperfect or incomprehensible, she clasped her father's arm, motioned his dismissal of the negro, and proceeded, though trembling with emotions of no ordinary character, to remind him of the duties which lay before him.

"You must seek this gentleman, my father. He has saved us in a moment of great danger, at the peril of his own life. You can only atone for the seeming indifference with which you left him, sick and wounded, at Mr. Badger's, by attending to him now."

"How attending to him, Virginia? I am no doctor."

"Oh, sir!—Oh, my father!"

"Yes—I don't see, Virginia, what we are to do."

"Oh, sir, but you can not help seeing. He is at this tavern—you know not in what condition. If he be seriously hurt, you must provide the physician, and bring him to your house."

"What! here, my child?"

"Yes, sir, here. What can the sick man expect of comfort in a public tavern—in one where he can have no attendance?"

"And what attendance can he have here, Virginia, more than from a physician?"

"Your attendance—mine—Louisa's—the attendance of a private family having more comforts at command, and acknowledging a debt of gratitude to this youth, whose weakness, and sickness, and injuries may all arise from the very part which he took in our rescue. He is charged with murder; and what murder can it be but that of the man whom he killed in preserving us? It is your duty to preserve, and to succor, and to defend him. Your evidence, alone, may save him from the punishment of that deed, for the justification of which no one can offer better proof than yourself. Go to him, my father, bring him to your own house, and see to his injuries. Our utmost pains

will scarcely acquit us of the deep debt of gratitude we owe him, and for which we could not even before bestow our thanks."

We have seen the result of this interview between the reluctant father, and the resolute and well-minded daughter. She gained her object, though not without finding considerable difficulty in the coldness and the fears of the conscious criminal. The very name of a sheriff's officer distressed him; the idea of absolute personal contact with them filled him with apprehensions; and, when Virginia suggested the probable importance of his testimony in the youth's defence, the image of the keen-eyed magistrate, looking into his own secret soul, reawakened the terrors which beset him on his flight.

But the maiden's mind was too firmly impressed with the conviction of what was due by her father for himself and his children to the daring stranger, and she was too happy, even in spite of the youth's sufferings, that the chance was afforded them to remove the impression from his mind, that *they*—perhaps, if the truth were properly written, it would read *she*—had been ungrateful, in so speedily flying from one who had done them such good service, without speaking their acknowledgments—nay, without ministering to those hurts which he had suffered in their defence.

And yet, when her father had departed on his mission of humanity, her heart began to tremble with some new misgivings. Had she not been too urgent in this business—had she not overstepped the nice boundaries of maidenly modesty in pressing for the admission of this young man into her father's dwelling? Might not the tavern be as good as any other place for his recovery—as full of aids and comforts? And, again, what if he were not a gentleman? A man might be brave and generous enough to risk his own life for the succor of a stranger, yet lack all those more estimable points of character, which would entitle him to the freedom of a family—to an *entrée* into its sacred retreats—to a seat beside its hearth—to the ministering cares of its daughters.

But such was not the case with Vernon. Her convictions fought earnestly against this suggestion. Her arguments were such as, naturally enough, rise uppermost in the mind of the young, the beautiful, the amiable, and true. He was himself

young, and his face, distinguished by the clear skin and features of a nice symmetry, wore an expression too unequivocally noble and manly, even while his eyes were closed in the swooning fit which had overcome him during their brief ride to the house of Badger, to suffer her to suppose him wanting in those advantages of birth, education, and a proper taste and character, with which her hoping fancy had already endowed him. He, too, must be true and amiable; and with this satisfactory conclusion to her thoughts and doubts, it was still surprising to herself why her heart should so flutter and beat, when she listened to her father's narrative after his return, and when she knew that the youth was already an inmate of the house.

But the agitation of her heart passed away when she was informed of his condition—when she learned that his hurt rendered it necessary that he should be kept in a state of the utmost quiet, lest the delirium which had already shown itself partially in his words and actions, should be increased to an extent which might baffle the powers of medicine. It was then that she became the woman—that she threw off the enfeebling apprehensions and fancies of the girl, and, following her father to the chamber of the patient, prepared to assist in the labors of the nurse.

The position in which Virginia found herself was an intoxicating one. The strong man, whose gallantry had saved her father and herself, lay before her, an unconscious dependent. To her feeble strength and whispered will, he could oppose neither strength nor will. She could look upon his pale face, and the subdued and silent features, without challenging a returning glance. She could hear the feeble moan and incoherent sentence that fell from his lips, and without being startled by a single consciousness of the exquisite delicacy of her own position. While he lay helpless and delirious, her emotions were all of that serene order which belong to the undisturbed performance of a single duty. There was nothing to alarm her sensibilities—nothing to make her look too narrowly into the propriety of her position, or the seeming tenderness of that regard which, she persuaded herself, was the due of gratitude—of humanity—anything, in short, but the ministrations of love.

The affections of women are usually unselfish. They love

the more profoundly, the more they serve. Their love grows with their labors—with their toil for the beloved—and, the idea of all injustice or oppression excluded, their passion is proportionately increased by their cares. To be allowed to serve is, with them, to love the object of their devotion. It is for man to show himself grateful for the service; this, perhaps, in the warmth of their devoted homage, is the utmost that they ask. Yet, even when this acknowledgment is withheld, the greater number of them will still continue the service. The service itself, to the dependent spirit, is a joy; and they will ask little more than the vine that only prays the privilege to be suffered to cling around the tree. Perhaps, the heart of the woman who has once loved, will only cease to love when it is denied to cling and to entwine itself. Even when there is no returning caress, the sufferance of love will still be a sweet privilege to the very dependent spirit. How many are there who enjoy no more than this—how many more are there who merit, much more than man, that unceasing homage which women are suffered only to bestow!

It might have been that Virginia Wilson would have soon forgotten Vernon, had they not a second time encountered. Love is not a thing of first sight, though first impressions, confirmed by a subsequent favorable knowledge of the object, will very commonly ripen into love. However favorable had been the impressions made upon Virginia by the appearance of the handsome stranger, changing scenes, objects, and circumstances, must soon have erased them, or subdued the vivid colors in which they were first made. But the cares of tendance upon the sick-bed of the youth—the deep and difficult respiration of his breast, laboring under the fever which assailed him—his languid but incoherent utterance—the occasional moan and whisper which escaped his lips, and those broken words which had a meaning she would have given worlds to understand—these were all circumstances which, as they denoted his dependence upon her, increased her interest in him; and no hours were more sweet, during the time of his illness, than those in which she was suffered to watch beside his couch.

But the crisis was soon over—a few days effected a favorable change—the returning consciousness of the patient, in free-

ing her from her attendance, deprived her of the sweet privilege which his situation had afforded ; and the languid eyes of Vernon looked round him vainly and impatiently for that lovely countenance of which he had some sweet and partial glimpses in the intervals of his disease.

In place of these, he encountered no forms more interesting than those of Mr. Wilson, or the little Louisa, or the sturdy Alabamian, or the more wily Saxon, the outlaw — both of these last being necessarily admitted to visit at the house of Wilson, as *friends* of the invalid.

As Vernon grew better, his anxieties at his situation were renewed. He felt the difficulties increase of declaring his true character, as the agent of justice, to his hospitable entertainer ; and the annoying character of this feeling was not a little heightened as he looked upon the bewitching grace, and encountered the timid glances of his lovely daughter. There was another circumstance that also afflicted him. He could not mistake the interest with which the keen eyes of Saxon followed the movements of Virginia Wilson ; nor suppress the involuntary pang with which he listened to the language of the outlaw, subdued, conciliatory, yet free and graceful, which he held with her. Saxon, too, sometimes enjoyed a privilege, which, in Vernon's feeble state, was necessarily denied to him. He could attend her in those afternoon walks, when the sun, sinking behind the forests, left only a few glimmering tokens of his light to soften the scene, and beguile the musing and melancholy spirit into groves, which, shady, sweet and solitary, seemed, more than all other scenes beside, to harmonize kindred spirits, and bring them into a more near communion with each other. Vernon, he knew not why himself, felt uneasy at these rambles. Not that they were frequent. Had he been a just as well as a close observer, he would have discovered that, on those evenings when Saxon returned with the maiden from her walk, she always came back at a much earlier hour, and her reserve was no less obvious than the obtrusive attention of her companion. Could he have been permitted a glance at them in their rambles, he would have been as much struck with the cold courtesy of her tones in replying to her companion, and the evident unwillingness which she displayed to receive those thousand little attentions

which are so apt, where the parties incline to each other, to sweeten the dull ramble, and shorten the prolonged paths of the forest.

But Vernon already watched all things with eyes readily disposed to see them through a false medium, and a spirit that conjectured the worst of all things which it is not permitted to see. His inability to share in the rambles of the maiden necessarily increased his apprehensions of the more fortunate person who happened to be her companion; and his distrust of the outlaw, which had been a sort of instinct, making him reluctant to assimilate with that person from the first, was now heightened to a feeling of positive dislike, as he contemplated the superior advantages which he possessed, and dreaded the events which might spring out of them.

Assuming that the attentions of Saxon were as grateful to Virginia as they seemed imposing in his own eyes, he suffered his annoyance to show itself, sometimes, in a cold glance and colder speech to the maiden herself, at moments when the jealous fit was particularly active in his bosom; and it was only by a strong and resolute exercise of that manly sense, which was the prevailing characteristic of his mind, that he could see, and seek to repair, by an immediate change of deportment, the brutality of which he felt himself guilty. On such occasions her eyes would sink to the floor—her voice, which had urged its inquiry in a tremulous tone, that might have conveyed a grateful meaning to the heart of any lover, not blinded and made obtuse by other and perverse feelings, would become silent; and she would seize an early opportunity to retire from the eyes of all, and in the solitude of her chamber pore over those mysterious emotions which oppressed her, without remedy; and wonder at the excitement in her heart, for which she felt unable to account. Why had the words of Vernon such power over her? Why did she shrink from his gentler glances—why did she suffer at his cold ones? Why was it such a pleasure to hear that voice, the sounds of which yet made her tremble? It was not long before circumstances provided her with a reply.

Meanwhile, Vernon improved hourly, and the attendance of the physician ceased to be necessary. The hour was ap-

proaching when the officers of the law would claim their prisoner, though this conviction was productive of more disquietude in his mind because of the pleasant communion which it was destined to disturb, than because of any danger in which his arrest promised to involve him. That he should be seriously made to answer for the death of Horsey, he did not suffer himself to think for an instant; yet, he did not, because of his confidence in himself, neglect those duties, the performance of which arose out of his present situation. He prepared letters to his friend and patron, Carter, giving a succinct detail of his wanderings and adventures, up to the very moment of his writing, omitting no event which might be held worthy of communication, excepting such details as belonged to the conferences which he had had with Badger and Rawlins on the subject of the banded robbers of the country. On this head he deemed it prudent to forbear all remark in a letter which was to be intrusted to the ordinary post; particularly, indeed, as Carter was not greatly interested in any such matters. With respect to the fate of Horsey, he related all that had reached him and all that he knew—detailed the chief particulars of their dialogues where they threw any light upon the purposes or course of that erratic youth, described the circumstances under which they parted, and, after relating the affair of young Mabry, and the assault of the latter upon himself, suggested a surmise—which he would yet have willingly forborne—that this young man himself might have been the murderer; for the probabilities strongly inclined to this opinion.

“I know,” he continued—“I know, my dear sir, that you will not need my solemn assurance—which I yet make—that my hands are utterly guiltless of this young man’s death. I trust to make this appear in my examination before the justice, and I am scarcely less anxious that you should do your best to convince his worthy old parents to the same effect. Next to the pain of this most humiliating situation in which I find myself, is the deep sorrow which I should ever feel at incurring, however unjustly, the suspicions of the good people whose kindness to me was not the less grateful to my heart, because it was comparatively unimportant to my interests. I must pray you then to spare no effort, by an array of all the favorable

facts which you possess, and a careful display of those arguments which you understand as well as myself, and which conclusively establish the folly and impolicy of such a deed, to acquit me, in their eyes, of the cruel imputation. I write," he continued, "from the house of William Maitland, himself, with whose family I have been an inmate for the last five days. I am in part indebted to his hospitable care for my improved health and recovery from my hurts. As yet he knows nothing of me, of my connection with you, or of my objects. My development of the latter, in such a manner as to effect your generous intentions toward his children—both of whom are females—and to escape the reproach of requiting good with evil, shall be my study between this and the period, when, in compliance with the demands of the officers of justice, I shall be compelled to leave him. My position is one of considerable delicacy, and my course, therefore, must be the result of a calm and serious consideration."

Such was a portion of the elaborate letter which Vernon prepared for the perusal of his guardian. Could it be imputed as insincerity, or an improper suppression of necessary particulars, that the writer said not a word more on the subject of those children of Ellen Taylor, in whom Carter had such a prevailing interest, and to whom he was disposed to exhibit a degree of generosity no less novel than extreme? Vernon's own conscience smote him for the suppression of particulars which he knew must interest his patron to know; but he strove in vain to overcome a reluctance, the sources of which he was unwilling to examine.

He was yet writing, when he heard the fall of a light foot-step passing through the gallery. He knew the step; and he hurried to the window with a movement, which, in his feeble state, it required some effort to make. His eyes followed the slowly moving form—the form of perfect symmetry—the movement of perfect grace. Her course lay through the garden to the shrouding woods beyond it. This was her accustomed walk. He forgot himself while he gazed—his thoughts were steeped in the dews of a most Elysian fancy—his worship was oblivious of all other objects than the one of its adoration. On a sudden she looked behind her—she looked upward

—their eyes encountered, and then she fled—fled even as the young fawn, that, wandering forth from the forest for a single instant, and, for the first time, in that single instant, encounters the glance of the hunter.

CHAPTER XXV.

LOVE-PASSAGES UNDER AN EVIL EYE—ASSAULT—CUSTODY— A RIDE TO PRISON.

“Well, perform it,
The law is satisfied: they can but die.”

THE OLD LAW.

A NEW spirit rose in his bosom as he beheld this movement. Why should I not pursue?” was the involuntary self-inquiry of his mind. He grew stronger as he proposed it. The stiffness of his wounded limb seemed to lessen, and grasping the staff with which he had been wont to hobble across his chamber in the last two days, he moved forward with a degree of rapidity that was scarcely justified by prudence. Unseen, he passed through the gallery, descended the steps, followed the lightly-beaten foot-path which he had seen her take around the garden, and was soon hidden in the same forests which yet concealed her from his sight. A new thought entered his mind at this moment. A keen pang of jealousy thrilled through his heart.

“What if I intrude upon a sacred privacy? Goes she not to meet this smiling fellow—this Saxon—this pleasing word-monger? Walk they not together daily? Wherefore should I approach them?”

Had the question been answered by his reason merely, he would most probably have returned to the dwelling without farther search. But he remembered the backward glance which she gave him—her sudden flight—and that memory, which answered nothing and told nothing, had yet a signification of more effect upon his heart than all the arguments of his mind



to his understanding. He went forward, and she had neither fled so far nor so fast, but that he was able to overtake her. She sat upon a fallen pine—one that the hurricane had but lately wrested from its foundation, the foliage yet green upon its branches. The long leaves hung around, and half-shrouded her from his sight. Him she saw not, but remained in her sitting posture, unconscious of his approach, until he was within a few paces of her.

Then she started to her feet—then he beheld that face—those eyes once more turned upon him, and he fancied they had been glistening with tears. But this might have been a fancy only—what need had she to weep? He saw no tears, and dismissed the suspicion from his mind; but he could not doubt that her cheeks were more pale than usual, and the languid brightness of her eyes—their dewy softness—could not be mistaken.

There were certainly some keen sensibilities at work within her bosom. He was moved instinctively by this conviction—he felt that there were some weaknesses in his own, but he strove to silence and put down that ever-ready consciousness which is so apt, in every young man's bosom, to convert into his special divinity the first passable damsel whom he sees. Vernon was a youth of calm, good sense, and he was determined to keep his emotions of blood and fancy from having their own way. He assumed a lightness and gayety of tone when he addressed her, which called for an effort. He took her hand, reconducted her to her seat, and placed himself beside her while he spoke.

“Give me joy, Miss Wilson, that I am at last able to find out your favorite walks. I caught a glimpse of you from the window, and grew strong to pursue, as I beheld the ease of your flight. I have long envied you these walks—let me make you my acknowledgments, since it is, perhaps, owing to your friendly cares that I am so soon able to enjoy them.”

“Not to mine—not to mine,” was her hasty reply. “I have done but little, Mr. Vernon; I am very happy that anything that we could do should have been agreeable to one to whom we owe so much. You—”

“Ah! you would remind me of a happy moment—but you

need not; I am too proud of having served you, however slightly, to forget my own good deeds. I may not boast of them, but I need no help to persuade me to remember them; they will always form a part of that pleasant chronicle, Miss Wilson, which the heart makes of its fortunate events. I shall set them all down together with the five days enjoyed in your cottage."

"Enjoyed, Mr. Vernon?" was the smiling question. "Endured, you mean."

"No, enjoyed," was the answer. "The pain of the illness is soon forgotten in the cares of the nurse; and the kindness which has soothed is always a pleasure to be remembered, even when the pain is forgotten. Let me say, then, how sweet to me is the obligation of gratitude which I feel to you and yours, for the pleasant cares which have ministered to my feebleness and need."

"Do not speak of it, Mr. Vernon. My father has only done his duty. But for you, we know not what might have happened to us. You saved us at the hazard of your life, and what we have done called for no hazard."

"But much trouble—much annoyance—"

"No, no! Mr. Vernon—it was a pleasure, sir—to—"

She paused—the jealousy of a nice maiden delicacy became apprehensive that her gratitude might express itself too warmly. Gratitude she knew was justified, but *that* had its own language, and the caution was only a proper one, lest she might employ for its expression the language of a warmer sentiment. Perhaps Vernon detected something of this consciousness, for he put his hand upon hers with a gentle effort to detain it in his grasp, as he said, hurriedly:—

"Speak, Miss Wilson—go on."

She withdrew her hand—the flush was renewed upon her face, but she said nothing. A moment followed of awkward silence to them both, which was only broken by a strong and decided effort on the part of Vernon. His lively manner had utterly departed in the first few moments of their interview, and it was with a gravity, natural on many accounts to his situation, that he renewed the conversation.

"Next," he said, "to my acknowledgments for your hospital-

ity and kindness, Miss Wilson, is the desire which I feel to place myself in a right point of view before you. I would seek to assure and convince you that your kindness has not been bestowed upon a criminal, though I have no proof beyond my own asseveration, by which to convince you that I am utterly guiltless of this murder which is laid to my charge."

"Oh, think not, Mr. Vernon, that we believe—that we can believe this foolish charge—I am sure—I know that it is groundless."

"On my honor, you do me only justice. The shedding of blood—the taking of life—is an offence against humanity from which my soul would shrink, unless in a case of absolute necessity. The only deed of the kind of which I have ever been guilty is one that took place almost in your sight, and was strictly justifiable from the circumstances preceding it."

"Yes—yes!" faltered the maiden, with a shudder.

"The young man for whose death I have been summoned to answer, was one of whom I knew but little—nothing unfavorable—but on the contrary, much which commanded my indulgence and regard. I had neither quarrel to maintain against him, nor interest to pursue; and my own objects, Miss Wilson, were of a nature which made me particularly desirous to avoid all strife and difficulty with any and everybody. That I have not been able to avoid them, is due rather to my evil fortune than my desire. I know nothing of the grounds upon which this charge has been made against me, or of the parties making it, but I trust soon, Miss Wilson, to satisfy the judge of that innocence which you have so kindly declared yourself willing to believe."

"Oh, sir, we know—we hope it will be so. I am sure there can be no doubt of it. My father says he is certain you will be released, and Mr. Jamison told me but yesterday that you no more committed the crime than he did, and he will soon enough convince the justice to that effect. He is very friendly to you, sir, that Mr. Jamison."

"A good fellow—a strange fellow—whom I never saw before the evening of my arrival at Lucchesa; but, like the frank men of our western forests generally, he carries his heart in one hand and his weapon in the other, always and equally ready

whether for friend or foe. I hope he may not be too sanguine in this matter—I rely rather on my own consciousness of innocence than upon any knowledge of the facts with which I am acquainted. I know nothing of the circumstances upon which the accusation is based.”

“Nor does he, I imagine; at least, he could tell father nothing, who was very anxious to know. His convictions in your favor seemed to arise from his prepossessions; you are fortunate, Mr. Vernon, in finding friends so readily—perhaps that fact alone may be considered a presumption in your defence.”

“I am afraid it would go but a little way toward my acquittal; but then it can be nothing but a presumption against me, and a presumption, unsupported by strong circumstances, can do me little harm. And yet, Miss Wilson, there is something in your opinion which carries to my mind a hope scarce less grateful than would be the assurance of my easy escape from this cruel imputation.”

“What is that, sir?” she asked, innocently. The question would have been left unspoken had she looked up in his face when she replied, and beheld the increasing brightness and piercing regard embodied in his glance.

“That you found nothing strange or wonderful—nothing unnatural or unexpected—in the supposed facility with which I have secured the favoring prepossessions of others. May I hope that he who has won the friendship of the rude countryman, will not be thought too presuming if he fancies that he has also not vainly striven for that of the city maiden? Your friendship, Miss Wilson, would be that of beauty, and youth, and education—taste without artifice—opinion without rudeness, and intellectual strength mingled with grace and sentiment. May I hope for these—may I dream, in the vanity of a too sanguine spirit, that in finding these qualities in you, and estimating them at their true value when found, I have not prayed in vain for the acquisition of your regards. Your friendship—”

He paused—the sentence remained unfinished, though its purport was no less clear to her mind than it was in the mind of him who yet withheld its utterance. It may be added, that she felt how much more grateful it was, left unspoken, than if

it had been concluded. Vernon himself felt that it could not be concluded as it then stood. It was too cold a projected termination to matter that was naturally rising into warmth, and a manner already warm and beginning to be impassioned. He wisely stopped short—short where he was—and she breathed less freely under the pressure of a sentiment which was strangely sweet, though almost suffocating.

And he—the glow upon his cheek made itself felt—the tremors at his heart grew almost to a murmur like the swift dropping of distant falling rain. Was it, indeed, friendship that he solicited from the favoring estimate of Virginia Wilson? At that moment neither of them thought of friendship,—they thought of anything besides. The sympathy was of a stronger sort which was stirring in the bosom of the two, and it found its proper utterance at last.

But let us abridge the scene. Love passages are rarely of interest to third parties; and either glide into the bright fantastics, such as glow in the ethereal world and season of a Romeo, or become, in the measured economy of the modern calculator, a question of portion, pin-money and proper establishment. In either case, the reader or speculator yawns in weariness or disgust, and is satisfied with those results which tend to a final dismissal of all the parties. We might hope—we certainly should pray—for a better interest with these. Vernon was no lovesick fantastic, though warmed by a temperament never subdued, not always measured, and sometimes endowed with no limited tongue for utterance; but his passions were perhaps more governable than those of most young men, and he had gone through a long course of severe self-study, by which they had not only been regulated to a certain movement, but his reason had also been advanced to a certain supremacy. This self-acquired power kept his utterance within the bounds of good taste and propriety—his love was that of the man and the gentleman—his passions were those of civilization. He had learned to know that *blood* frequently presumes in the language of affection, and becomes obtrusive because of a selfishness which it disguises by another name,—he also knew that the first lesson which true love has ever taught, is one of humility—but that humility which is always allied to hope.

Love is the religion of the passions, and its zeal, though warm and fiery, is still that of one officiating at high altars, where the first sign of the advent of the God is shown by the submission of the worshipper. By gradual transitions—by the one mystic key-note—the look, the word, which, here and there, suggests the stages by which two hearts, having the same journey to take, are gradually brought together—an interest grew up in the breast of each, leading to a just comprehension of the other; and ere the one spoke, the other felt. Vernon, to his own surprise, discovered that he had won a heart long before he ever dreamed of looking for one; and Virginia Wilson—certainly, until she met with our hero, she had never thought it worth while to take any care of that, which she now discovered it to be so seriously sweet a business to surrender.

Though we have denied ourselves the pleasure of beholding the love scene and hearkening to the love dialogue between the parties, there was another who, “squat like a toad” in the cover of the neighboring foliage, had no such scruples as restrain us. He heard and witnessed all. This was the outlaw Saxon. He had followed their footsteps, and had penetrated to a spot which would enable him to arrive at a knowledge as vexing to his spirit as was the manner degrading by which it was obtained. He heard, with ill-suppressed fury, the whispered word, half doubt, half tenderness—he saw the smile which trembled in the eye it lightened—the gentle meeting of those mingling hands, which, under Love’s slightest pressure, become instincts themselves and of the most sensitive character;—and no less new than bitter was the pang that went through his own breast, as he beheld the happiness he envied. He had only of late grown conscious of a passion such as he had never felt before. He had sought Virginia Wilson daily from the first hour that her presence had shone upon his sight; and under the pretence of an interest in his wounded fellow-traveller, he had obtained access to her dwelling with the purpose of pressing those attentions by which he hoped to secure an interest in her heart. He had joined her in her daily walks—was not without that easy dialogue and graceful manner which are of all things most essential to success with woman; and

had striven with his best powers to commend himself to her regards.

Yet she had shrunk from his pursuit; had discouraged the intimacy at which he aimed—had responded coldly to his conversation, and shown herself more than commonly obtuse whenever he had striven to be more than commonly intelligible. Yet, here was one, who, almost without his own consciousness—certainly, without design—had succeeded in that which had tasked his utmost ability, even under the guidance of a settled purpose and a deliberate scheme. The mortification of his pride increased the pang of his disappointment, and the vindictive purpose, with which he had before regarded Vernon, now assumed a deeper character in his mind.

“It is well,” was his thought, as he surveyed the pair—“but the hour of vengeance is at hand. You would bind the outlaw, Harry Vernon! We shall see. Artful, and strong, and sagacious, as you think yourself, you are in the toils. Deceived by one traitor, Clement Foster will scarcely suffer himself, hand and foot, to be manacled by another. Pliant once, he is now unyielding; and by all that is sacred in the love of the saint and the fear of the sinner, you shall pay the penalty of your presumption by your life. You would hunt the bear in his native brake, beware of his embrace.”

He left the place of his concealment with a stealthy step, and without disturbing the lovers, who were now but too much absorbed with one another to have senses for the rustling branches, or the slight motion of a gliding form among the leaves. He proceeded to the tavern with all the impatience of hate, and summoned his confederates who played the part of the officers of justice. To them he issued his commands, and described the place in which the lovers were still to be found.

“Seek him there,” said the vindictive outlaw; “and seize on him at once. Give him no indulgence—drag him away, though you find him in her arms. Hear none of his promises—hearken to none of her entreaties. The scoundrel is a spy upon us—another Hurdie; and he deserves no mercy at our hands. Away! you know the place.”

He saw them depart in the same instant, and waited with malicious impatience, the result of his furious mandate. The

lovers meanwhile had prepared to return to the cottage. They were already on their way—the hand of the maiden in that of Vernon's; her eyes cast upon the ground as she listened to those accents so dear to the young heart—those idle words and whispers, which, though they sound sillily enough in the ears of third persons, seem to the initiate more precious than manna in the wilderness. At this moment they were encountered by the ruffians who stood suddenly in the path before them. Virginia shrunk back in alarm, while a faint scream issued from her lips.

“How now, fellows! What mean you?” demanded Vernon, who did not at first recognise them.

“Fellows! indeed!” said one. “We’ll see who’s the better fellow when Judge Nawls sets eyes upon us. That’s for being civil to you, I suppose, and letting you off when we had you. But there’s an end to that. You must go along with us.”

“Along with you! Who are you?”

“Oh, you’ve no memory of us! I shouldn’t be surprised if you’ve forgotten yourself too. You’re not Mr. Harry Vernon, that killed one Thomas Horsey, and we ain’t the men that ‘Squire Nawls sent to catch you! Come, come, young ‘un, that’s not doing the thing handsomely—that’s not keeping to your promise. You must go along with us at once, so drop the young lady’s arm, and here’s our’n. It ain’t quite so soft a one, it’s true, but, by the hokey, it’s better able to help you; and then you know, need must when the devil drives—so no grumbling.”

The action of the ruffian corresponded with his words. His hand was already extended toward the collar of Vernon’s coat, when, stepping back a pace, the indignant youth lifted his staff with a promptness and determination which drove the fellow back much faster than he had advanced. In another instant, however, a calmer mood filled the mind of Vernon.

“This is all idle. I certainly do not mean to resist these men—I have no reason to fear the magistrate.” Such were his thoughts as he turned to Virginia.

“Miss Wilson, forgive me. I am giving a needless alarm. These are the officers of justice, and seeing me well enough to travel, they naturally enough seek to perform their duty. Will

you proceed to the house?—I will follow you. I would speak with them a while.”

He led her forward until they had passed the officers, then left her to proceed alone while he returned to them.

“Gentlemen, I will be ready to go with you in an hour;—I will but return to the dwelling of Mr. Wilson, and at the end of that time I will meet you at the tavern.”

“’Twon’t do, my boy,” was the answer, “you’re too ready with your stick to be trusted. You must go with us now. We can’t trust you out of our sight.”

The youth would have expostulated, but while he spoke, one of the ruffians threw himself upon him, bore him to the earth, and, in spite of all his assurances that he would quietly accompany them, proceeded to bind his arms with a cord which the providence of Saxon had procured for the purpose, and which the assistance of his companion enabled him to use in spite of the angry but feeble resistance of the prisoner. When bound, they lifted him to his feet, and placing themselves, one on each hand, commanded him to move forward in the direction of the tavern.

He did so with as much quietness of temper as he could command under the reasonable anger which naturally followed the provocation. He tried to convince himself that they were doing nothing more than their duty—that they had yielded him all reasonable indulgence—and were bound, as soon as they discovered his ability to travel, to secure his person against the chances of escape. But the sedative effect of his own reasonings was very partial. He still could not resist the wish that his arms were once more free, and his staff once more in his hands. “My staff should make ye skip,” thought he, in the language of the “Ancient Mariner.” But he overcame a desire which he felt to be no less idle than hopeless, and tried to obtain his remedy in another way.

“A civil answer turneth away wrath,” and he had long known that a civil tongue will carry a man unscotched through the whole western country. Assuming the men beside him to be no other than what they professed to be, he determined to reason with them as persons who could have no motive for re-

fusing any indulgence to a prisoner which was not inconsistent with the security of their trust.

"You are unnecessarily hard with me, men," he said, quietly. "You can have no reason for thinking I would run away, since, if such had been my desire, I could have been off at daylight, and none had been the wiser. Why then would you make an enemy of a man who can be your friend—who is willing to reward you? Suffer me to go back to the dwelling of Mr. Wilson for an hour only. You, in the meantime, can watch the dwelling on all sides. My horse is at the tavern—you can secure him—and without a horse I can not fly very far. I wish but to make my acknowledgments to the family which has treated me with so much kindness."

"You ought t'have done all that before, my lark—there's no time for you now. So set forward. I tell you there's no trusting you. You clipped me over my noddle already, the first day I set hands on you, and my jaw isn't quite smooth yet; and you forget, just a bit ago you'd have tried it again with that stout hickory that helped you forward. Twice warned is enough for me—I don't risk a third scuffle with any man if I can, help it. So, look you, give but a single flirt again, and here's into you."

The fellow showed a monstrous bowie-knife as he spoke these words, and by his reckless expression of countenance, suited to his bold and unfeeling language, Vernon readily believed that his better policy was to obey quietly. He went forward, and encountered the hardy Alabamian, Jamison, who was just about setting out for Wilson's on his customary afternoon visit to his friend. Saxon was nowhere to be seen.

Nothing could exceed the rage of the Alabamian, as he witnessed the degrading situation in which his friend stood. He was at once for fighting the officers, and nothing but the most earnest appeals from Vernon kept him from violence. One thing, however, he was resolved to do, and in this particular our hero was satisfied he should have his own way—that was to cut the cords which bound the arms of the prisoner. He drew his knife for the purpose, and was advancing, when the constables both opposed him with like weapons. But he was not to be intimidated by this show of valor.

"There's two of you," he said, "but I count myself good for three, at least, such slender chaps as you; so here goes at your kidneys, and one drive of my six-pounder will let more sins out of your carcasses than all the saints could ever put in virtues."

With an earnestness which left nothing to conjecture, the stout-heart Alabamian, wielding his knife in air—a huge, bright instrument, with a back-bone like that of a butcher's cleaver, so heavy that its own weight, if falling, must have made its wounds deadly—prepared to rush forward upon the constables. But these worthies were not willing to wait for such an encounter. Receding from their posts, they clamored to the bystanders for protection, crying out a "rescue"—a "rescue." Without heeding their clamor, or suffering anything to divert him from his purpose until it was finished, Jamison cut the cords of the prisoner, and seizing the moment when the officers were most noisy and most remote, he whispered in his ear:—

"Be off now, Harry Vernon—there's my own horse hitched close beside you, and I'll keep off the rascals while you're mounting. Show 'em clean heels, and I'll be after you with your own nag, and will join you at Buzzard's Roost in two hours. They're afraid of me, the niggers, and you see I ain't afraid of them. D—n 'em, I don't mind half a dozen of them, fair front and no dodging. So go ahead, my boy, and leave the scatteration to me. You're too weak to fight now, so there's no reason or right to expect it of you."

The Alabamian was astounded when Vernon thanked him, but declared he had no purpose of the kind.

"I am innocent of the charge, Mr. Jamison, and do not fear to meet it."

"Oh, well! That's right enough; but guilty or innocent, you see, Harry, when they're for putting ropes on a freeman, that's a time to be off, or to fight with tiger's tusk. I'm all grinders after that, and a ridge-saw that works along the middle."

Meanwhile the clamors of the constables were gathering a crowd about them.

"He has cut the prisoner loose—the man that murdered Tom Horsey—help!—seize!—catch the murderer," &c.

"Shut up, you yelping pugnose!" cried the indignant Ala-

bamian; "none of your d---d lies about a business you can't understand. Look you, men, they had the gentleman corded up as if he had been a panther of the wilderness—roped his hands behind him—and he just out of a sick-bed, and making no resistance, and telling them all the while he was ready to go along with 'em. It's only they're sich blasted cowards, afraid of a sick man—afraid of any man. Dang my buttons, I'm almost ashamed I didn't borrow a pen-knife to do the business. This bowie-blade is a'most too big for such eternal small souls as they've got."

"You hear him confess he drew his knife upon us?" said one of the officers to the crowd.

"Ay," said Jamison, "and how it scared the niggers white when they saw it."

"He rescued the prisoner from us."

"A lie, nigger—he's at your service—he says it himself—so bring out his horse; and I'll tell you another thing—I'm at your service too. I'll ride along with you and see fair play, and if you've got anything to say agin Dick Jamison, let it out as loud as you please when you stand before the judge."

The scene ended with the quiet departure of Vernon, accompanied by his friend Jamison, under the enforced escort of the officers.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STAGE-HERO AND THE INCUBUS — ROMEO APPROACHES
THE FOOTLIGHTS UNDER A FAMOUS MANAGER.

Caliban. Lo, how he mocks me! wilt thou let him, my lord?

Trinculo. Lord! quoth he, that a monster should be such a naturall

The Tempest.

HAVING now fairly lodged Vernon for the murder of Horsey, it is high time that we should retrace our steps and look into the progress of the latter important personage. Though somewhat baffled in his hope of having a companion, in a kindred spirit, to the end of his journey, the stage-struck hero was not without his consolation in the moment of the parting from his friend. He was on his way to the scene of action; another day would bring him to the place where the wandering tribe was to be found, for whose communion he panted even as the hart panteth after the water-brooks; and visions of theatrical glory began to gather on his eyes. With that restlessness of imagination which betrayed itself in everything which he said and did, he was already fancying himself in the midst of such difficulties, arising from bad management and the labored rivalry of inferior persons, as were really grateful to a man of his temperament. His cogitations, which broke forth at moments into rabid soliloquy, were most generally of this description. Now he laughed at the idea of Jim Tilton and Hugh Peters, and the ridiculous figures which they must cut as Brutus and Julius Cæsar; at the next moment, he was soliciting their applause for some new reading with which he contemplated to astound the natives and improve Shakspeare. Anon he went back to the cottage of Yarbers, and his visions, then, were of Mary Clayton, as the most perfect Juliet that ever stimulated the

best capacities of a Montague; and as that fancy worked in his mind, his voice grew more emphatic, and a spectator in the bushes might have been no less surprised than amused to have heard and seen him as he rode, declaiming at the full pitch of his lungs to Juliet in the balcony; and, at moments, in the earnestness of his action, almost flinging himself from the ungainly and venerable steed of his sire, whose neck he sometimes embraced, by a very natural error of his imagination which confounded it with the form of Juliet, or Mary Clayton rather, who, in such moments, seemed brought immediately within his reach.

In this manner, with a mind far away, in a province utterly foreign to that through which his only half-conscious person travelled, he went forward without interruption, and was only brought back to the actual condition of things around him when he reached the river, and the grim Charon of that Stygian stream, leading his horse through bog and sluice, contrived, with some difficulty, and after no little delay, to place the two fairly in his boat. Some time was consumed in conveying him across; for the river swamp, in the day of which we write, was one of the most interminable intricacies that ever distressed a good steed or vexed an impatient traveller. But the delay did not so much affect the actor. He soon made a companion of the boatman, a simple, stupid fellow, who scarcely comprehended five of all the words that were said to him, and answered none.

But Horsey needed no answer—his only object was an auditor, and he was sufficiently satisfied, if suffered to talk on without stint or limit, though the hearer made no response to any of the questions which he asked. These were neither few nor unimportant; but as the actor did not wait for an answer, why should we? He was soon, comparatively speaking, set across the river; but the thousand hollows of the swamp, filled with the waters of a recent freshet, were around his path, leaving it at moments doubtful in what direction he should pursue his way.

But Tom Horsey was not the man to suffer himself to be bewildered long. His mind soon ran off in the direction of his desires, and, looking rather to the end of his journey than to his course, he gave himself not much concern about the way which

led to it. After a few moments of reluctant attention, in which it seemed to his eyes that all his efforts only led his hobbling horse from one sluice into another, he soon forgot everything but the one subject most at his heart; and if his allegiance wavered for an instant, it was, perhaps, in regard to an exception which might be considered, indeed, only as an auxiliar to the other—namely, the person of Mary Clayton, and she as Juliet.

With a mind thus directed, he had no attention to bestow upon the external world around him, and did not seem to heed, or be conscious of the fact, that the day was approaching to its close—and that, so far from nearing the cottage where he proposed to spend the night, he had, in fact, utterly departed from everything like a road, his horse slowly toiling forward through Indian footpaths that deepened occasionally into the cart or wagon-width, but only at places where the presence of bog or creek suggested the best of reasons why they should do so, and not because they had ever been employed by any such vehicles. But, utterly absorbed in his own speculations, none of these signs were perceptible to the actor, and night would have come upon and caught him in the swamp before he would have been conscious of his predicament, but for the sudden appearance upon his path of one, whose wild and uncouth exterior and abrupt *entrée* were of too startling a character to pass without regard.

The stranger was a chunky little imp, not more than four feet high, wearing a bunch upon his shoulder, which at first glance, suggested to Horsey the idea of a native-born Richard. His arms were long like those of an ape; his ears of corresponding dimensions; his lips, pursed into a point like two bits of shrivelled coonskin, were covered with a thick furze, not unlike that of the hair upon the same animal; and with a short, pug-like nose, and little, quick, staring gray eyes, that peeped out from under a shaggy white pent-house of hair; he presented altogether the most comical appearance that could be imagined, and one that would have made the fortune of a cunning showman in any of the Atlantic cities. His legs, though short, were strangely bowed—indeed, the extreme curve which they described was one cause of their shortness. He might have

risen to five fair feet, could they have been smoothed out symmetrically. As he went forward, which he did with a readiness that occasioned surprise in the spectator, the bow of the advanced leg would completely overlap the other, so that he would seem, to the passing glance, in possession of one only.

His garb contributed something to his comical appearance. He wore tights, as pantaloons, which showed to a nicety the attenuated size of the crooked limbs on which he depended for support. He seemed almost entirely without flesh. The lower limbs were not merely short and deformed, but slender to a degree, which made the spectator apprehensive that they might snap as readily as pipe-stems under the swollen and dropsical bulk of body which they carried. But this show was deceptive. The urchin had an elasticity of muscle, a capacity of stretch and endurance in his sinews, and a share of positive strength in his excessive breadth of shoulders, which made him little inferior in conflict to most ordinary men, and in speed he could have outwinded the best.

A little jacket of green bombasin, made on a plan quite as narrow and contracted as the breeches, rendered the hump singularly conspicuous upon his shoulders; and by contracting these somewhat too closely, served to throw the long and apish arms out from the body in such a manner as greatly to increase the similitude between the owner and the ungainly animal to which we have likened him. A coonskin cap, set rather jauntily on his cocoanut-shaped head, and tied under his chin with a green riband, completed this parody on man, who, leaping suddenly out of a green bush in the middle of a mud puddle, that lay beside the path, proved a more startling object of terror to the horse of the actor, than of surprise to himself.

The animal sunk back on its haunches with a snort of terror; and, with a greater show of muscle and spirit than he had deigned to vouchsafe since he had begun the journey from Raymond, he was for wheeling about in good earnest, and making flecter back tracks than he had ever made before. But that Horsey was a born rider, like every other western man, he had been soused for a season in any one of the hundred miry habitations of frog, hog, and alligator, which so thickly garnished the low territory around him.

Meanwhile the little urchin stood upright, or as nearly upright as he could, in the narrow pathway, never making the slightest movement to budge or assist the rider, but grinning with a smile of satisfaction at every wheel and flirt of the still frightened animal, which promised to fling his rider into the ditch. The unassisted efforts of Horsey, however, managed to evade these attempts, and, at length, finally succeeded in subduing the spirit—no difficult task—even if he did not so soon quiet the terrors of “Old-dot-and-go-one.” Shaking his finger at the dwarf as he forced the horse forward, the actor exclaimed, with a degree of good nature which probably arose from the consciousness that his good horsemanship had not been without a spectator—and which, had he not been the conqueror in the strife, would not have been so apparent:—

“Ah, you comical little fellow! how you scared my horse!”

“And you too, if the truth was known, I reckon!” was the unhesitating reply of the urchin. “I’m a man mighty apt to scare people that’s not used to me.”

“Gad! there’s reason in what you say!” exclaimed the actor. “But look you, my pretty little Jack of Clubs, suppose I had been a sour-tempered fellow instead of what I am, what would I be doing at this time, and what sort of speech would you be making? Wouldn’t I be using a hickory upon your shoulders, my lad, for scaring my horse, and—”

“His rider!” The urchin finished the sentence after his own fashion. “Ha! ha! ha!” The woods rang with his yelling laughter—a peal more strange and unnatural than anything in his shape. “Ha! ha! ha! Mr. Traveller—more easy said than done. If the thing were tried, it might be your shoulders and my hickory; and if you think otherwise, why, you can only begin the business as soon as you please.”

“Say you so, you little apology for a man—you little cock-a-doodle-doo!—I’m almost tempted to try odds with you for the fun of it, for riding by one’s self makes one rather dull, and the fun that turns up by the roadside is always apt to be the funniest. Wait a bit, then, till I can cut a hickory.”

And the actor made a show of dismounting as he spoke.

“Boo! boo!” cried the little urchin with a yell, as, leaping from the path, he ran along a fallen tree, slippery with mire,

that rose out of the ooze of the swamp and stretched away into a canebrake, in the midst of whose tops the dwarf squatted himself down, and grinned, and laughed, and pointed with his finger at the assailant, confident that he could not so easily be approached by an unpractised footman, and secure of a second means of flight in the branches of a tupola hanging above him into which a customary leap would easily carry him.

"Ah! ha!" exclaimed Horsey, "there you are; and you think yourself safe, do you, but what do you think of that, my little mannikin, eh?"

He pointed a pistol upward as he spoke, but the derisive laugh of the dwarf mocked this exhibition, as he in turn produced from his breast a like weapon, the dimensions of which would have swallowed up those of his assailant.

"Ha! ha! and what do you think of that?" said the urchin. "It's snout for snout—and the advantage is all o' my side as yet."

"How do you make that out, you pretty little deformity?" demanded the actor, in good-natured accents, amused rather than annoyed by the readiness of the urchin.

"Well, it's easy enough, and you might see for yourself," replied the other; "I'm rather the littlest man of the two, but I have the biggest pistol—you're the biggest man with the littlest pistol. Ain't my chance the best to hit, you big fellow—ain't it now? Suppose we try—that's the best way to come at it—you may bang away first, for all the good it's going to do you."

"Come down, you small specimen of humanity—you youngest son of the little old gentleman in black," said the actor, with a hearty good humor that satisfied the dwarf there was nothing more to fear. "Come down, you queer little coxcomb, and let's hear all about you. You are certainly the strangest sniggering little scamp that I've seen in all my travels. You'd make a most superb fellow on the stage—a witch in Macbeth—no!—Gad, maybe you're one of us already!"

"Maybe I am, maybe I'm not!" said the dwarf, with a grin, as he descended. "Who are you—can you bite?"

"Bite!"

"Yes, bite; have you got teeth to bite, or are you nothing but a barking dog?"

"Teeth to bite—barking dog!—why, you talk as queerly as you look, my little Richard."

"Richard! Why, who told you my name?"

"What! your name is Richard, then?"

"Yes, with a pair of scales to the end of it—you couldn't guess that, I reckon!"

"No! I don't know what you mean."

"I'll tell you—my name is Richard Stillyards, or Dick Stillyards—sometimes they call me Dick Still, and sometimes Dick Yards, and then it's only when I'm in the humor that I answer them. I always answer gentlemen when they call me by my right name."

This was said with a manner which filled Horsey with merriment, and would have filled a wiser man with sadness. The swagger, the solemn strut with which it was accompanied, and the air of superiority with which the narrow and protrusive chin was perked forward, had in it so much of a rotund self-conceit, that never was that foible of humanity so completely be-mocked and be-devilled.

"Why, what is there to laugh at, I wonder," said the dwarf, in tones and with a manner of more real dignity, though with an equally-ludicrous effort.

"Hark ye, Stillyards, my dear fellow," cried the good-natured Horsey, "let us shake hands. You're a d——d comical little fellow, Stillyards, and we must jog on together. I'll make your fortune, Stillyards; by the powers, you shall grow famous—you shall. Don't you grin, my boy, I'm telling you nothing but the truth. You shall grow famous and make your fortune. You shall be one of us—and I'll undertake your tuition. By the ghost of David, Stillyards, I'll find you a dozen characters in Shakspeare alone which could not be done by anybody half so well as yourself. You have read Shakspeare, Stillyards, have you not?"

"Read!" said the dwarf, with something like a sinking of his dignity. "Well, stranger, to say the truth, reading ain't my business, though, I suppose, I could larn just as soon as anybody else. There's a nigger of Joe Smith's, named Peter—his young

missis taught him to read in a short six months only, and he can now read write-hand 'most as good as print. I'm sure if I had any chance, I could larn as quick as Peter."

"Devil a doubt, Dicky, that you might, but who's to learn you, unless you could persuade the same young lady that taught Peter to give you a few lessons?"

"Why, didn't you say you'd larn me?" said Richard Stillyards, with a grin of satisfaction that caused a considerable encroachment of his mouth upon the territory usually conceded to cheeks and ears.

"To speak and act, you terrapin, and not to read," was the reply.

"Look you, stranger, if it's the length of my teeth you want to know, call me out of my name," replied the urchin, with a grave air of offended dignity. "You're not the first man that's lost flesh between my jaws for making too free; so it's jist as well you should know it beforehand. I know I'm a little smaller than you, and maybe not quite so good looking, but that's neither here nor there, and I don't mind the difference of size no more, when I feel wolfish, no more than I'd mind a dog-bark in a seedy night. I axed you a question jist now, and didn't get an answer."

"What was that, Mr. Richard Stillyards?" demanded Horsey, with an air of respectful deference, exceedingly delighted with the strange monster he had encountered, and disposed, with a true actor's fondness for fun, to humor the weakness which betrayed itself so ludicrously.

"What was it, Mr. Richard?—speak again, and don't imagine for an instant that I am at all desirous to fill your jaws with my flesh, as I can not say with certainty that I have any to spare—certainly none to spare unless you are willing to take it just where I give you leave. I could give you a bite in one place or in another, and not miss it, perhaps, but it's likely you'd be choosing for yourself. Eh?"

The literal manner in which Horsey had chosen to accept the coarse figurative language which the urchin had employed was, in western parlance, "a huckleberry above his persimmon," and Mr. Richard Stillyards began to regard his companion as an animal no less strange to him than he appeared to

Horsey. After a brief space, which he devoted in silence to a jealous survey of those features which, by this time, the actor had schooled into inflexibility, he replied, as if satisfied with his examination:—

“I was a-thinking at first, stranger, that you was a-funning with me, but I believe it’s only because you don’t know no better. I’m a country gentleman in these parts, and have company camping out in the woods, here away, down by the corner of Little Bend in the Cane Prairie—every fellow’s a man among ’em, all barking dogs—and so I axed you about your teeth.”

“My teeth?”

“Yes, your teeth,” replied the deformed curiosity; “ain’t you got teeth? Can’t you bite?”

The actor surveyed him with intentness, and the result of his examination, as he beheld the *bonafide* earnestness in the fellow’s face, was to convince him that Richard Stillyards was an idiot—a conclusion which, no doubt, has been already reached by the reader. But let him not be mistaken. Dick was no idiot, but a cunning owl that hoots with a greater drawl of melancholy when most meditating mischief. He had his purposes in the question that seemed so excessively simple to his companion, and was answered satisfactorily when he received no answer.

“Dick, my lad, you’re a strange fellow. To ask a man whose teeth have been opening upon you every moment since we have met, if he has any!”

“Oh, no harm, mister—I don’t mean any harm—to be sure, I see you have got teeth, and I oughtn’t to ask, but it’s a way I’ve got; but you’re a-travelling only?” and here the urchin gave a keen, quick glance to the corpulent saddle-bags, filled to the brim with knight, prince, warrior, and tyrant, which hung across the saddle of the actor. In a second instant his eye was averted, as he beheld that of the traveller fixed upon him.

“Dick, my boy,” said Horsey, “you’re a nut for the devil to crack; d—me if I can. To be sure I’m a traveller, just as certainly as I’ve got teeth; and now that you remind me, I’d like to know where I’m travelling, and how far I may be from a place of lodging?”

"Why, don't you know?"

"Devil a bit!"

"What! you don't know where you're a-travelling? I reckon you knew when you begun?"

"Why, yes! that I did; but look you, many a man sets out for the horse and finds the halter. I started for Benton."

"Benton?"

"Yes, Benton. How far am I from the house of one Jenks Glover?"

"Jenks Glover! Why, he's on the lower road—a matter of sixteen miles to the left of you. You've got on the wrong track."

"The devil you say!"

"No! I say the wrong track; it's you that said 'the devil,' three times, or maybe more, and it's no wonder you lost the road. You must have lost it after the first jump of the ferry."

"And it's how far to Benton?"

"Mush! I can't tell you—it's on the other road, and a smart roundabout chance to get to it."

This news confounded our traveller. He shrugged his shoulders, and looked round him upon the dismal, dark, and seemingly impenetrable swamp, the pale cypresses of which shot up sparingly, with the tupola and the ash, to gigantic heights, interlaced between with a complete wall of matted canes, briars, and wild thorny vines, that promised to defy even the rude pressure of the grisly bear, or his more good-natured sable brother. The prospect made the actor shudder.

Dick, my boy," he said, "whose is the nearest house, and how far?"

"There ain't no house on this road, that I knows of, and nobody."

"If that thy speech be sooth!" the actor began, after the nature within him; but the dogged stare of the dwarf warned him that his companion suffered nothing equivocal, and he resumed in plain English: "No house, Richard—no house, my dear fellow?—Why, what am I to do—where am I to sleep to-night?"

A grin diffused itself from ear to ear upon the fellow's countenance, as he listened to the words and beheld the visible con-

sternation of the actor. He seemed disposed to amuse himself at the expense of the traveller.

"I reckon you ain't used to sleeping out of the dry. You were born, maybe, in a nice house, with a close roof to it?"

"Ay, to be sure, and in a devilish comfortable bed too, I reckon; but what then, Dicky, my darling?"

"It's a bad chance you'll have for a dry house here in Big Black Swamp; there's no better house than Cane Castle, and it's so large you can't see the walls, and it's so high you can't see the roof; and if you ain't used to the stars for candles, you'll have to go to bed in the dark. There's no house near by, and only one under ten miles, and that's 'Squire Nawls'—and he's a judge, and don't take in travellers."

"But he lives on the Benton road."

"No he don't. I reckon he's on the upper road, a smart distance from it. As for road—you're in no road at all here—you're in Big Black Swamp, and if your nose was long enough, you could smell the river at a short mile off, on your right. If you was used to the smell, you could smell it here without going much farther. I can, easy enough,"—snuffing, while he spoke, with consummate complaisance—"and a mighty sweet smell it has, too, just after the sun's gone down."

"You're an amateur, Mr. Richard."

"No, d——d if I am, and I tell you agin, stranger, 'twont do to call me by any nickname. I'm Mr. Richard Stillyards, or Dick Stillyards, and I won't go by any other, so I warn you before danger."

"Well, Dick, my dear fellow, I'll be civil—the fact is, I'm in no humor for making enemies. But tell me where I am to sleep to-night—where shall I get a bed?"

"I licked Ike Laidler only a month ago, 'cause he called me a little sarcumstance," continued the deformed.

"And sufficient provocation too," said the actor; "but, Mr. Stillyards, the bed—the bed—the house to sleep in."

"Well, now, stranger, you're mighty pushing. Ha'n't I told you there's no house under ten miles—"

"Then you told a whopper, Dick Toady," cried a third person, suddenly emerging from the bushes on the left, and interrupting the dwarf without any of that scrupulous consideration

upon which he was so much disposed to insist in his conversation with Horsey. The stranger was a small man, with a narrow sunburnt face, a hook nose, and lively twinkling gray eyes, that seemed to cover a world of cunning. His voice was good-humored, and at the first sound of it the dwarf started with an air of dissatisfaction, which did not seem to justify the free and familiar manner with which the new-comer had addressed him.

"How should you tell the gentleman, Toady, that there's no house nearer than Judge Nawls'?"

"Well, where's any?"

"Why, here, you blue-bottle, here in Cane Castle, hard by, within a Choctaw's mile. When the stranger asks for a house, what does he mean but a place where he can take his snooze out without danger and disturbance. He don't mean wall of clay and clapboards—he means nothing more than a good supper and an easy sleep. Am I right, stranger?"

Horsey, somewhat relieved of the annoying conviction that he must sleep in a canebrake with the soft ooze of a rank swamp in place of a mattress, was yet not utterly satisfied that this description of his desire was altogether a correct one. Still, there seemed little choice, and the free and easy manner of the stranger was too much after his own heart not to reconcile him to things even more disagreeable than those he feared. He was consoled to find that if he must sleep in the swamp, he was to have a good bedfellow—a conviction which had not soothed him for an instant during his whole protracted conversation with Mr. Richard Stillyards. He expressed his assent to the suggestion of the speaker, though in a qualified measure, but this the other did not seem to perceive. He proceeded in his speech in a manner still more agreeable to the traveller.

"We are a few of us, stranger, almost playing gipsy in the swamp to save expense. There's some six or eight of us, Toady here not being counted, though he may be thrown in as a sort of make-weight. We sleep pretty much in a huddle, under pole and bush tents, and there's room for an odd one when the river's foul and the swamp rises. We are players—play-actors—perhaps you don't quite know what a player is!

—the people in these parts look on us with as much wonder as pleasure—we play plays—speak speeches—show tricks, dance and sing, for the public gratification and our own. We shall soon set out for Benton, Lexington, Lucchesa, and other villages—soon as the rest of the boys come in—and if you'll keep in the neighborhood till then, you'll see rare sport, I tell you."

The effect of this speech upon Horsey may readily be conjectured. His ejaculations of pleasure interrupted the speaker a dozen times before he had finished, and then he grasped his hand with a hearty tug that threatened to shake his arm off. He forgot his cares of bed and lodging and supper—all cares—all doubts—all apprehensions—in the one predominant pleasure that filled his soul; and a hundred questions and ejaculations followed each other too rapidly for correction or reply, as he gave free vent to those emotions which he had so long and so unwillingly restrained.

"And you belong to little Jim Tilton's company? And where's Jim?—I knew the little fellow in New Orleans, when he was—a-hem!" He was about to say candle-snuffer, but a little prudence came to his aid at the moment, and put an estoppel on his tongue.

"Jim Tilton," said the other, "is no go. He's but a poor drab, and the less we say of him the better. He's not with us now, and I seriously doubt whether he'll ever show his face among us. It'll be a dark day for him when he does."

"Ha! how so? how so?"

"Well, he's a rogue—that's the long and short of it. We played at Manchester to a good smart chance of a house, and before the play was over, Jim was missing, and the treasury with him. We heard of him going down to the river to Vicksburg, and that's the last. He won't come back, unless he brings a double chance of picayunes to make up hush-money."

"The skunk! But it's like him," said Horsey. "He was a poor shote of a fellow at Orleans, a mere candle-snuffer for Caldwell, when I was playing second-rates at the American."

"You playing—you! Why, who are you?" said the newcomer, with a very natural expression of surprise.

"My name is Horsey," replied our traveller, with a modest dropping of the voice.

"Horsey!—Not the famous actor at Ludlow's in Mobile? It can't be possible. Tell me, stranger?"

The gusto with which this was spoken—the voluminous odor which it bore up into the mental nostrils of Horsey, was as good as a year's growth—a prize in the lottery—or a crowning benefit. His blood tingled in his veins from head to foot, yet never did mortal face struggle more hard to subdue the exulting smile—to assume and wear the pursed-up aspect of humility.

"I was at Ludlow's," he replied, modestly, "and I don't know that there was any actor there but myself of my name; but I was not famous—no, no! I did some good things—I think I did—but they passed without notice. I do not think I got much reputation in Mobile."

"My dear sir, you do the Mobilians injustice—great injustice. I have heard of you a thousand times in Mobile, and from the best authorities. Rea thought you a first-rate. Rea was an excellent judge in theatricals—my particular friend—a noble fellow, and there was—what's his name?—the editor of the Commercial—ah? devil take it, I have such a memory. But it matters not. I tell you, Horsey, never did dramatic reputation stand higher in Mobile than did yours. You were off for New Orleans when I reached the city, but everybody was asking after you, and on one occasion it was reported you had arrived but had no engagement, and then there was a hue and cry after the manager. It was asked in all the papers why you were not engaged, and he was compelled to assure the audience, under the terrors of an uproar, that you should be engaged as soon as your arrival was made known to him. I was present at the time, and know the stir it made."

"Is it possible? I wonder I never heard of it before."

"I reckon you didn't read the newspapers. It was all there—all put down as large as life. Nay, if you were in Orleans, you must have heard of it."

"No,—indeed I didn't. I never read the newspapers. I took a dislike to editors. I thought them all humbugs—they spoke very disrespectfully of me at my first beginning, and I

was resolved never to read their stuff. But I was wrong, I suspect—”

“Wrong! Yes, that you were! You have shut your ears against some pleasant truths. If they treated you ill at first, they made you ample amends afterward, as I think I can show you. I have, I think, some of the Mobile Patriot of that time that’ll open your eyes. Newspapers and editors, Mr. Horsey, should not be looked down upon with too much contempt. They are useful in their way. They may be made so at least; and, between us, it’s best to treat the humblest profession with charity, since, if our managers continue this trick of running away with the strong box, there’s no telling to what condition we may be reduced.”

“Very true! But what could be expected of such a fellow as Tilton. I was astonished when I heard that he had presumed to set up for a manager.”

“What! you heard of us then?”

“Yes—I heard of you down in Raymond, and my purpose was to join you.”

“Join us! God bless you, Mr. Horsey. It’ll be the making of us,” said the stranger, grasping Horsey’s hand and flaming out with the opening in Richard—

“Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by the son of York.”

“That was well spoken, Mr.—ah, pardon me!—but oblige me with your name.”

“Jones! an humble one, sir, utterly unknown to fame!” replied the other with a great show of modesty.

“It may be, Mr. Jones,” replied Horsey, warmly; “but those two lines which you have just now spoken were really well said—very prettily said—excellently well said. I shall look for good things from you. Indeed, I shall.”

The flatteries of the stranger had seduced the judgment of Horsey into a corresponding flexibility, and, in a few moments, the apprehensions of the traveller were all forgotten in the exultations and resuscitated hopes of the actor. The anxieties natural to his situation, and which, but a moment before, had grown almost painful, were dismissed entirely from his mind,

and in a moment he had resumed all the characteristics of manner and feeling, which he had shown to our readers on his first introduction. He now spoke, *ad libitum*, of plays and playing only. Every third word was a quotation; and it was only when the new-comer, who had kept up the ball with no little show of practice and ability, found his corresponding store of quotation utterly exhausted, that he was brought back to the more immediate necessities of his situation. It was now the turn of Jones to remind him of his lodgings for the night. But it was not so easy now to direct the attention of our actor, who, once aroused on his favorite theme, would wag a tongue in its honor so long as the member itself had a single working hinge to depend upon.

"But we forget, Mr. Horsey," said Jones, in prosecuting his often-baffled purpose—"we actors, who so love our profession, are very apt to forget other matters. Here we are, wasting our readings upon the desert air, when we should be thinking upon other matters. Supper now and a place to sleep in—I must crave your pardon for keeping you from these things so long."

"Nay, these are small matters. The toast and tankard can be got at any moment, but for the rest—what of my old prince of Hickories? What of Hugh Peters, and how are his timbers? He to make a Julius Cæsar? Ha! ha! ha! The thing's ridiculous, Jones; and he must be got rid of as well as Tilton—birds of a feather—no game—fellows that will disgrace us only. Crows, crows!"

"Very true, sir—I agree with you fully, but—"

"Oh, to be sure, I know there will be a difficulty about it;—it will be unkind to drive the fellow off and hurt his feelings; though, d—n his impudence, he deserves no better for presuming on such a vocation. Why, Jones, I remember even now the comical figure the old fool used to cut in giving us lessons in reading. Even then, when I was a mere brat of a boy, and knew little or nothing, I could scarce keep my face to see him mouthing out the golden verses of the great master. He'd get upon a box for a stage—his bow legs at a straddle, as if a ditch lay between 'em, for the better support of his bag-of-cotton body; and then he'd turn his little turnippy pugnose, fairly

affronting the heavens, and his lips sinking deep at every sentence that he spoke, in the hollows where his teeth were knocked out just in front—he got it done one dark night as he fell over a wash-tub, and composed himself among the stumps of a new clearing. The hole was large enough for my finger—and he to be an actor! Ha! ha! ha! It's ridiculous—we must get rid of him; though, to be sure, as you say, we must do it in such a way as not to hurt the poor devil's feelings. By the ghost of David, though I should remember Little Bow-legs only by his hickories, yet I'm for doing it tenderly. We must smooth the track for him, so that he may walk off freely. But go he must, if we hope to do anything. He'd be only in the way—he can do nothing."

"Yes, to be sure—you're perfectly right, Mr. Horsey, and the management might very well be put into your hands. I'm sure we might make our monster Dick here do everything that Peters might do; but, as I was saying—"

"What, Stillyards!" exclaimed Horsey, turning upon the attentive dwarf, who stood, all the while the dialogue proceeded, wondering, with owlet eyes and broad-distended mouth, swallowing the incomprehensible stuff that he never could digest.

"Look you, Jones, that fellow's a host himself. I wouldn't give my friend Dick here for all the Peters under the sun. He's the most comical fellow! What a Caliban he'd make—a natural-born Caliban! Egad! we had a scene between us just before you came up—a scene for a melodrama—it was worth a picayune to see it. He ran up that tree like an orang-outang; drew out his barker, squatted on his haunches, with the felicity and grace of a black bear at a honey-gun, and challenged me to a regular exchange of shots. The comical fellow—he's worth a company himself; and in New York—look ye, Jones, after all, New York's the place—on the Bowery, that fellow, as Caliban, would be a sure card, and we must play him when we play ourselves."

"We must talk of this to-morrow," exclaimed Jones, desperately; and seizing upon the only pause which Horsey had made for an inconceivably long time—"I will send Dick forward to get things in readiness for us—supper and a bed. Ho.

Dick! let the boys know that the great actor, Mr. Horsey, is coming with me. Away, by the gulleys, while we ride round. We'll be with them in a half-hour."

The urchin prepared to obey.

"But why not go along with Caliban?" demanded Horsey.

"For the best of reasons. He can go where our horses cannot. On a line we are but a poor quarter of a mile from our camp-ground; it will be a good half hour's ride to reach it the way we must travel, and night will swallow up the track before we are done. We must ride, therefore, to make up lost time. I was so pleasantly occupied, Mr. Horsey, in listening, for the last half-hour, that I never saw that the sun had left us. You must give our boys some lessons to-night as soon as supper's over."

"Ah, Jones, you flatter," said our friend, modestly; "I am no such man as you think me. You can do the thing quite as well as myself."

"No, no!" replied the other, with something of a mournful tone, as he rode forward—"No, no! that is not to be hoped for. Would to Heaven it were!"

Horsey followed with a new feeling of delight within his bosom. The tone of the cunning Jones, the words he employed, not to speak of the prospects and promises of ultimate and unqualified triumph before him, were all so much heavenly manna to the still hungering vanity of his heart; and never before, in all his career, when the possession of money, lavishly squandered, secured him the clamoring applauses of the profligate associates who misled him, had he received a more grateful tribute to his ruling desire than that afforded by an adroit outlaw of the Mississippi border. He followed his guide without suspicion, and was soon swallowed up from sight in the darkness that now environed the dense swamps of the Loosa-Chitta.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RAW RECRUITS—AN AWKWARD SQUAD—MORE MYSTIFICATION.

Corb. I know thee honest.

Mosca. You do lie, sir.—VOLPONE.

IT was quite dark before Horsey and his companion came to a halt; and when this was done, the former looked round him with astonishment, as he could not well divine at first the reason for doing so. There was no more sign of habitation or human comfort then, than had been seen at the moment when he encountered the dwarf. Indeed, if possible, the *locale* looked decidedly worse than ever. The very spot on which they stopped was a perfect quagmire, to which the rising waters of the contiguous river had access at every freshet; and, beheld in the uncertain starlight, our actor could see that there were ponds all around him, and little crossing brooklets that seemed to struggle slowly through the thickening ooze, as if seeking to regain the parent-stream, by whose subsiding torrents they had been left. A dense wall of canes spread itself over the path in front, and Horsey was about to give utterance to the doubt and bewilderment which he felt, when his companion, who seemed in nowise disconcerted, uttered a shrill whistle, which was immediately answered by the deep bay of a beagle at a little distance ahead.

"They will find us now in a twinkling," said Jones; "that dog will soon tell them where to look, even if that crooked scamp, Stillyards, should prove a sluggard by the way. You will be relieved of your nag in a few moments, Mr. Horsey, and we will coon a log for the rest of our journey. So much for

living in a swamp. These are difficulties which would scarcely trouble us in Natchez or New Orleans."

"Well, but why do you incur them? Why live in the swamp?" demanded Horsey, to whom the increasing difficulties and perplexities of the last twenty minutes of circuitous navigation had begun to suggest certain doubts of the policy of choosing places of abode for which there seemed no justifying necessity.

"Ha!" said the other, with a laugh, "there are troubles in the city which we have not here, and which we count a great deal worse. Here we should laugh at a sheriff's officer—there we should pull hat and bend knee to him in respectful deference and if you ever blarneyed a tailor or bullied a landlord—"

"Say no more," said Horsey, to whom the references of Jones seemed to have almost a personal direction, and were therefore sufficiently conclusive—"say no more—I see the wisdom of your arrangements, and were I as near New Orleans as you are to Vicksburg and Benton, I should most probably have needed no explanation."

Some merry references to the artifices and annoyances of duns and dunnees followed this sally, in the relation of which the experience of the two seemed to be by no means unequal. If Jones had his story of sharps and flats in Vicksburg, Natchez, Manchester, and Benton, Horsey could tell tales quite as lively of Mobile and Orleans; and could these stories have been heard by the city sufferers, the consolation would have been of a sort to have induced a large addition to the sum total on the off side of the profit and loss account. Certainly, the most patient of all fashionable costumers would have cursed such customers.

Their merriment had not subsided, when the figure of a man plunging from a fallen tree that lay half covered and quite concealed in the dark by the canes which grew luxuriantly around it, presented himself in front, and immediately took charge of their horses. A word between Jones and the new-comer furnished sufficient explanation; and the former, telling Horsey to follow him closely, put aside the canes which concealed the fallen tree, and was, an instant after, hidden from sight. Horsey followed promptly, and found himself on a sort of natural bridge which carried him safely over a creek, of whose existence,

though but ten feet from where he had been standing, he had not till that moment been aware. Though deep, and pursuing a direct course to the Loosa-Chitta, it kept so quiet a travel all the while that its murmurs were barely heard among the canes that grew out of it, even when Horsey stood directly above its bed; and the assurance of his companion only then certified him of its existence.

“Steady now, Mr. Horsey. The creek below you has a depth of ten feet, and a sudden souse at this moment would startle more alligators than a man could ride for a half-mile around us. There is some soft clay on the log that makes it slippery, and if you find it ticklish, you had better squat in time and coon it.”

But Horsey was too good a Mississippian to need such cautious counsel, and he boldly followed his conductor after his own fashion, and in perfect safety. A few moments brought them to the end of the tree, when, leaping to the earth, after the example of his companion, our traveller once more, after a long interval, found himself upon *terra firma*.

“Here we are,” exclaimed Jones, “in the immediate neighborhood of Cane Castle. Our way is clear enough, though it still seems thick to your eyes. We are in an Indian trail, which the Choctaws have used, I reckon, for a thousand years. I knew it was ready made to our hands—our feet, rather—and very good use we’ve made of it so far. Congratulate yourself, Mr. Horsey, that there’s no hope for a sheriff here! We have security in the bog and liberty in the brake, for which I know one poor devil that would pray in vain were he in the swamp at Natchy. Here you may laugh as loud as you please, and sing as perverse, and no one to remind you of laws and judges—no one to say ‘Shut up—you shall neither sing nor smoke.’ There’s no law here against tobacco.”

These assurances, which promised so great a degree of liberty to the habitual swearer, singer, and smoker, and which, in brief, summed up the amount total of what are usually defined as the blessings of civil and religious liberty, did not, however, seem to awaken that degree of satisfaction in the mind of the actor, which was justified by the importance of the promised benefits. A word about the cast of characters, or the selection of pieces,

or anything, however immaterial, in the business of staging, would have called for infinitely more of his regards. Receiving no answer to what he had spoken, Jones, with practised cunning, readily changed the subject to one more grateful; and mustering all that he could remember of the plays he had ever read and seen acted, he contrived, by some imperfect quotations, to divert the attention of Horsey from such subjects of speculation as would most probably have occurred to almost every ordinary traveller in his present situation. Naturally frank and unsuspecting, it was by no means difficult to deceive a person whose mind was so completely surrendered up to the one engrossing passion; and though exceedingly acute in his judgments, and active in his inquiries, on all subjects not actually swallowed up in the maelstrom of that mania which, at an instant, absorbed everything that came within its whirling vortex, yet nothing was more easy than to lead him off from the minor pursuit, by the suggestion of the smallest gleam from that greater object which was the all in all of his desires. But, on this head, the reader wants no new lights at this late moment. He, perhaps, unlike the deluded traveller of whom we write, is not so sure of the Thespian character of those performers whom the worthy Horsey is about to encounter in the swamp. He is not now to be told that—but why should we anticipate?

A few moments sufficed, following the little Indian footpath and his companion, to bring the actor into something like an opening in the forest, which consisted of mingled pines, cypresses, and ash-trees, closely set, and still more closely united—save in the opening mentioned—by the matted canes, which seemed to fill up all the intervals between them, and, in fact, formed a dense margin to every one of the hundred beds of watery ooze which skirted the river, the rank and festering deposit of a thousand years. Here the actor was encountered by gay gleams of firelight at a little distance, by the imperfect blaze of which, he discovered himself to be on the verge of a little area, or amphitheatre, in the swamp, high and dry, a sort of island, the circuit of which was probably a meagre quarter of a mile in extent. This, following his conductor, he rapidly overpassed, until they reached a sort of nook whence the fire met their eyes.

Here they found as merry a set of scamps at their revels as ever blessed the sight of a wayfarer on the edge of a gipsy encampment. There were about seven or eight persons, squat upon their haunches, and busily engaged in the adventurous business of *vingt-un*; a sight that warmed the heart of our traveller even more than a smoking supper might have done, since, though not absolutely dramatic in itself, it suggested to his mind one of those leading associations of theatrical life, which brought back his fading memories with fresh colors, and greatly increased their vitality.

But if their present employment seemed natural enough to the heyday recklessness of the ordinary actor's life, there was little besides, in their air and appearance, to justify, in the mind of Horsey, their adoption of the business. He looked in vain for that happy ease, sometimes, in "mouths of wisest censure," esteemed impudence, which distinguishes so greatly the actor by profession. The dashing effrontery, the devil-may-care deportment of the sect, was lacking. There was none of the graceful swagger of the genteel comedian—none of the solemn emphasis of him who wears the image of fate, and looks habitual tragedy upon his brow—a Prometheus-like gloom and defiance which would have realized the ideal of an Æschylus, and filled the eyes of the poet with the figures that else had only had existence in his mind; and as for the comedy of stare, and grin, and clatter—the broad fun, and ridiculous, reckless farce—never was pleasant company so utterly without its enlivening and mirth-compelling attributes. The very soul of every rascal in the group seemed set only upon the sixpences before him. Mammon, not Momus, was the god of the entertainment, and our traveller's anticipations were taken half aback, as he beheld an expression of care and intensity in every face, so utterly unlike that good-humored indifference to fate and fortune, which hitherto had been to him one of the chief attractions among his intimates of the lobby and the green-room.

"These chaps have greatly mistaken their profession," was the unexpressed thought of the idealist. "There is not a scamp among 'em who will ever do more than snuff a candle or shout at a pageant. They will give me no support—they will bungle most damnably. 'Then came each actor on his ass.' Gad!

the ass will be uppermost here. But these are supernumeraries only. There must be others. I must wait. At least, I am sure of good foils, if I have no rivals; and if they can make play at all, they will give me all the chance I want. But they are mere Turks and Muscoghees—a sort of savages that will never stop till they scalp what they have murdered. Their parts are all in danger of a bloody death. But—buz! buz!”

The introduction of the stranger was rapidly gone through with—too rapidly to enable our traveller to witness any of those beauties of deportment which he still fancied might make their appearance in that nice performance—the reception of a guest for the first time—which so eminently calls for a pleasing and prompt gracefulness, without which reception is more properly repulsion, and an invitation to make oneself at home, looks very like a suggestion to depart. Jones seemed to conjecture what was passing in Horsey’s mind, and took an opportunity, a few minutes after, to say to him, in a whisper, that the giants were yet to arrive—these were the pasteboard personages—that class of creatures which we use from necessity, and keep out of sight when we can.

“But they will improve, Mr. Horsey, under your tuition—under your example I mean. They have had no opportunities—have seen no shining lights, and are shy, sir, very shy—much can not be expected from them as yet; but when you have given us some readings, Mr. Horsey—then, &c.”

It was not surprising after this appeal, that our vain actor beheld his companions with a look of greater indulgence and more charitable thoughts. The wily Jones knew all his soundings, and the tragedian was little more than a puppet in his hands.

Meanwhile, new fires were built, new combinations formed, and Horsey found himself as busy about the blaze as the rest, and, though with a less intense feeling than the rest, receiving his cards, and “planking” his shillings. His friend Jones sat beside him and assisted him as a partner to lose his money in the game. As the “stakes” disappeared, the good humor of the group seemed to increase, and the contagious mirth soon made Horsey as indulgent in his criticism as unmindful of his losses. He thought the scamps susceptible of improvement.

and, stimulated by the suggestions and applauses of Jones, his quotations became recitations; and his own language was at length limited to a few occasional comments which served to introduce and link together the choicest declamatory passages of Shakspeare. The Toms, Dicks, and Harries, around him looked as grave and seemed as attentive as possible; but it might have been perceived by one more watchful than our amateur, that none of them forgot the game in the delight which he felt or affected to feel, and the stakes were always lifted as soon as won. They were men who had long since learned to combine the severest cares of business with the utmost relaxations of pleasure.

"That was superbly said, Mr. Horsey," remarked the attentive and respectful Jones, as the actor concluded the famous soliloquy in Hamlet, "to be," &c., "I can say with confidence that I have never heard that passage delivered before—never—though I have heard it a hundred times from other lips. You make us *feel* the poet, sir, and tremble at the philosophy. Ah, sir, how these reflections come to us, poor outcasts of fortune, like so many dreadful experiences. Who has not asked himself whether it was not better and nobler to make his own quietus with a bare bodkin, than to suffer the thousand cruel and crushing evils, such as the rest of the passage has described? Not that it is all evil, Mr. Horsey. I am disposed to think, so far as my experience goes, that that part of it about 'the law's delay' might very well be left out. The law's delay, sir, is one of the most agreeable features which the law ever shows to a poor debtor like myself, and as I have said before, but for the law's delay, and that of the deputy, many's the poor devil who would have lain at the mercy of tailor and tapster, without hope or redress, to the detriment of his genius, and to the great loss of the majority of mankind. I'm thinking, Mr. Horsey, that that half line might very well be left out of the passage."

"Impossible, Mr. Jones—there would be an ugly hiatus—the music of the line would be lost—utterly lost."

"But the passage might be altered—something might be supplied in its place. Supposing we were to read 'the play's delay'—now that would be such an improvement as would be grateful to every ambitious actor."

This suggestion grated on the ears of our amateur. He was one of those profound devotees of the great literary outlaw, who venerates his very faults, even as the antiquarian treasure up the rust and canker of the relic. To remove anything, in his eyes, would be to impair the value and take from the propriety of what remained; and his reply was uttered in tones more energetic than he had hitherto employed.

"Sacrilege! sacrilege, Mr. Jones—how can you think of it! No, sir, the passage must stand as it is—neither too little nor too much—nothing can be added, nothing taken away. It's true, as you say, the law's delay is a very agreeable thing to the debtor. Gad, sir, I have been indebted to it quite as often as yourself; but our notions would be greatly altered if we stood in the creditor's shoes; we should then hold the passage to be perfect as it is; as, indeed, I hold it now, having no debtors, and being still over shoes on the books of other men. No, no! sir—no liberties with Shakspeare—remember the admirable counsel to this effect which he gives to our profession in particular on this very head—to 'speak no more than is set down for them'—I can forgive a fellow when he is out and the audience waiting, and the prompter asleep, if he fills out from his own head; but when he does it out of presumption, seeking to improve the work of the mighty master, 'that's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool' that does it."

"I don't know but you're right, sir."

"I am! I am right, Mr. Jones—I am positive in this matter. The more you think of it, sir, the more you'll have occasion to agree with me; and in the beginning of our campaign, sir, the thing can not be too much insisted upon for the benefit of the whole company."

"I was thinking, sir," said Jones, with some hesitation of manner, and a bow and look of particular deference almost amounting to veneration, "I was thinking, sir, that it might be of great service to our boys if you'd be so good as to give us your reading of that very part."

"What! the advice to the players?"

"Yes, sir; I'm sure there's not one present that would not be delighted to hear it from your lips. What say you, boys—what Ricks, Mason, Baker, Bull?"

“Ay, ay! let’s have it!” was the lively cry from all, in tones far less full of solicitous deference, and a great deal more indifferent than those of Jones. Meanwhile, however, the cards were shuffled, the stakes set down and lifted, and the game underwent no cessation, though, in the excitement of his declamation, our friend Horsey’s cards remained upon the turf, from which, however, his stakes were always considerably withdrawn by the banker, as soon as laid before him.

“But it will interrupt the game,” was the considerate suggestion of the actor. “Our friends would rather play than listen to those dull recitations, of which they hear so much professionally.”

“Devil a bit!” was the warm reply of Jones to the modest apprehension of Horsey. “Devil a bit! Dull recitations, indeed! By ——! such luxuries are more than they are used to—more, perhaps, than they deserve. Put up your hands, men, while Mr. Horsey gives us these passages; down with your pictures, take up your picayunes, and let us surrender our souls for a while to the scene. By the way, Mr. Horsey, if you have no objection, the thing might be made more complete—the illusion rendered more striking and fascinating—in short, sir, if you would consent—”

He paused and looked in the actor’s face with doubt and entreaty, equally mingled with respectful deference;—but he spoke not.

“What, Mr. Jones?” was the demand of Horsey, who was at that moment too well pleased to have refused the speaker anything in his power to bestow, and who felt assured, from the manner of Jones, that he was only about to solicit some further extension of that courtesy, the concession of which was, perhaps, far more gratifying to him than it could be to the hearers. The reply of Jones was uttered in the hesitating accents of one who still scrupled to give offence.

“If I remember—I think, Mr. Horsey—nay, you *did* tell me, that you had brought with you a portion of your wardrobe.”

“You are right, sir—I have with me a Hamlet and a Romeo, a Rolla, a Turk, and two field-officers, in my bags, but—”

“The very thing, my dear sir!” cried Jones, with an air of

inexpressible delight; "and now, sir," he continued, "if you would only crown your favors and give us your readings in costume—give us the favorite passages in Hamlet, which, I should think, from what you have suffered us to see, your best performance, you would bind us to you eternally. It would make us so happy—it would help us so greatly—we should all be so much pleased, not to speak of the immense benefit—that—that—"

Here the cunning dog stopped very judiciously, leaving unexpressed the superb climax which the imagination of the hearer was better able to provide, than the flattery of the eulogist. Soothed, seduced, perfectly overcome, in the weakness of his heart, by the adroit management of the wily Jones, the reluctance of the actor was very feeble. He said something about his horse and saddle-bags not having come, and murmured a fear that he might be tiresome. But these objections were soon met and overruled by the other.

"Your horse is here in our stables. The bags you can get at in a moment; and if you will go with me, we can put you at once into a chamber where you can make all your changes without disturbance."

There was no resisting the pleasant importunities of his companion; and, following his guidance, Horsey was led through a contiguous thicket into another smaller area, where he found several huts of bushes and bark, in one of which his horse was fastened, along with that of Jones; while the fellow who had taken charge of them lay fast asleep before the door, using the saddle-bags of the actor for his pillow. He was soon aroused, and made to carry them into another of the huts, where Jones, having studiously repeated his flatteries, left the delighted actor to prepare his toilet prior to his first rehearsal before his new companions.

These, meanwhile, had their own thoughts on the subject of the new-comer.

"Now, what the devil can Jones be after," was the muttered speech of one surly fellow of the circle, "in bringing this conceited ass among us? He seems to have precious little money, and he's not worth robbing; he's a fool and can't be trusted; and why we are to pretend to be actors, and all that nonsense.

and listen to his stuff, is more than I can reckon up at a single tuning. What do you say, Baker—do you understand it?"

"No better than yourself, but I s'pose there's something in it, since Jones says that he's ordered by Saxon. Saxon's after some strange business, I reckon, and I s'pose he's got his reasons. What they are, I don't care to know, so long as the fellow has a Mexican to lose, and don't know when he loses."

"Nor when he wins, for that matter," said another. "Bull gathered up his stakes and winnings together, the first time in his life that ever his losses filled his pockets."

"The fellow's well enough," said Bull, with a growling chuckle—"so say no more. I'm for his playing cards, or anything he pleases, so long as the playing is profitable to us. But here's Jones coming back; let us know all about it from him."

"How now, growlers?" said this last-named person, as he returned among the group. "Can't you be satisfied with your gettings, when they come with so little trouble? This fellow's your pigeon, pluck him as you please; but look you that he does not guess what you're about. Take your counsel from me, and humor him awhile—it will give us quite as much sport as profit."

"But what's the upshot of the business—are we to stop his wind, or is he to be one of the family? He'll never make a beagle, so long as his head's full of play-stuff."

"Let that give you no trouble. It's enough that Saxon plans it. This fellow's nothing in himself, but we use him against another. There's one thing, let me tell you, before you go further. Weston is dead—shot through the head by a young lawyer going up to Lucchesa, on t'other side of the river by Big Ben's. There's a start below against us; and the old methodist, Badger, is beginning to growl aloud. So, lie close—there's no fear of the dad, while the son is a beagle. He'll give tongue enough when the hunt's a-foot. As for this chap, all that you have to do is to wink, look wise, talk what player nonsense you can, and praise him for his acting, whenever he asks questions that you can't answer. That will stop his tongue, and turn his thoughts, and that's all that you've to do. I'll manage all the rest of the business. Put up your cards now, and get the grog

in readiness, and let Girhan get our supper, while I'm gone for the actor. You'll see him in his glory when he comes back, but no grinning—nothing to frighten him. Hear him with open mouths, and if you can throw in a bit of blarney, let it be done. But do it neatly—nothing slippery—nothing stupid. The fellow's no fool when he ain't flattered—it's soft soap only that turns his head. Enough—you have the trail."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SWAMP THEATRICALS — NO FUN IN TRAGEDY — A BULLDOG
AMONG THE BEAGLES — THE STAR UNDER A CLOUD —
STRIFE IN THE SIGN OF TAURUS.

Serv. My lord, you nod ; you do not mind the play.

Sly. Yes, by Saint Anne, I do. A good matter, surely. Comes there any more of it?—*Taming of the Shrew.*

WHEN Jones returned to his comrades, accompanied by Horsey in character, the scene had undergone a change. The cards had disappeared—fires were lighted anew—a rude plank table, with rude block seats, had risen in the midst, garnished with sundry black bottles of strong waters, and everything looked fair for a promising carouse. The men, too, had undergone some little change. The exhortations of Jones had not been lost upon them, and, taking it for granted that their account lay, as it had always done before, in securing the desires of their leaders, they were prepared to yield themselves, heart and hand, to the game that was before them. A warm cheer, thrice renewed, received the actor, who stalked before them in all the mournful and philosophical dignity of the youthful Dane. A buzz, a murmur of approbation, followed this outbreak, and, whether sincere or affected, the result was everything that might be desired. For the first time in his life, Horsey found himself in the presence of actors who were not rivals—candidates for popular favor, who had no jealousy of their neighbors—and professors of an art that lives on popular applause, who were yet no less prompt in bestowing it. Our traveller was the

last man in the world to mortify himself with any unnecessary doubts of that sincerity which spoke in the language of encomium. And yet, to do his understanding all justice, it must be added that Jones took infinite pains to avoid arousing his suspicions. His own applauses were all well-timed, judiciously expressed, and had the appearance of being urged with great hesitation and forbearance. A respectful deference distinguished even his solicitude; and his chief argument to Horsey, and one which he had insisted on in frequent whispers, was the necessity of a good model for his wretched creatures.

"These fellows have never played before, my dear Mr. Horsey. They have been picked up from all parts of the country. Some of them have never even looked upon a play, and none of them have any just idea of what a performance should be. I know the trouble it will give you to tutor them, but it is so important that we should make a good figure at first, and if, as I believe, you regard the drama as so important to the civilization of the people—to the improvement of popular taste, and—and—"

All this kind of stuff was very convincing to our stage-struck hero. His eye brightened while he looked around him, and surveyed the mute watchfulness and vague curiosity of stare that met his glance on every side.

"Something can be made of them, Jones," he said paternally, in a confidential whisper, "and, considering the great importance of the thing, I am not unwilling to undertake their tuition. You are right in regarding it as all-important that they should know something before they begin; though, really, it is surprising—very surprising—that they should have ever thought of the stage. It seems to me that any other vocation—"

The comment was answered by a conclusive whisper.

"Beggars, you know, Mr. Horsey, can not be choosers. We must make the most of them till a better bargain offers, and then I'm clear that we get rid of them. On this head we must confer together hereafter. We must take the management into our own hands, since Tilton's off, and there's no knowing where to set hands on Peters. It is a happy chance that sent you in our neighborhood. I was beginning to think matters desperate and had almost given up in despair, and gone off. Now, there's

no danger. You will set us on our feet again. But there's time enough to talk of this hereafter. Now, the lads are waiting. Gentlemen, Mr. Horsey is ready—pray give your attention."

"Ay, ay," exclaimed the surly fellow, Bull, "and so are we. We've been ready this half-hour to hear him; but, Jones, s'pose, if it's not disagreeable to Mr. Horsey, let's take a swig all round to better acquaintance. It sort-o' makes a body easy to listen when the liquor's afloat; and sort-o' softens the ear and opens the understanding. I always feels a great deal easier to judge, when I'm in sperrits."

"Vulgar fellow!" muttered Horsey to himself, annoyed at an interruption at the very moment when, throwing himself into posture, he was about to begin. He concealed his chagrin as well as he could, while the vigilant Jones, calling to order, endeavored to keep down the moral scum which promised to rise up with quite as much pertinacity as ever, with the very next agitation of the atmosphere.

"A good idea of Bull's, that, Mr. Horsey," said the politician. "A glass to better acquaintance is not amiss; though I'm not so sure it makes one judge the better in intellectual matters and things of art. What have you there, gentlemen?"

"Monongahela, fresh from Beattie's Bluff," was the reply of Bull. "There's a piggin of peach in the bushes, the last of the barrel—*prehaps*, the gentleman will take his pull from that?"

"*Prehaps*! Take his pull!" Horsey could scarce suppress his astonishment, and forbear repeating the offensive vulgarities aloud.

"Our Jack Pudding!—our fellow for broad grin and buffoonery!" whispered Jones in the ear of the amateur. "A very comical fellow when he's in the humor, Mr. Horsey—never saw so comical a dog as he can make himself. All this is put on—it's in character only. He is only disposed to let you see that there are other actors beside yourself."

"Indeed! Is that it? But he looks very serious for a funny fellow."

"That's the beauty of it, sir—that's the wonder—that's what makes him inimitable in his way. You'll hear him speak the dialect of the most ignorant backwoodsman, as if he was born to it, and look for all the world as if he never could have

spoken any other. But, I can tell you, so far from that being the case, he's well educated—speaks Greek like a native, and is profound in mathematics, besides having an excellent taste in poetry."

"Is it possible?"

"True as Holy Writ; but he has his humors, sir—and one of them is to disparage himself. He will even lie, sir—lie like a Trojan—in order to make himself little. Ask him now about Greek; and if he happens to be in the humor for running his cross-rigs upon you, he'll swear he knows nothing of what you say, and will probably answer you in the coarsest lingo of Catahoula and the swamp."

"A strange perversity, indeed."

"It's the way with all geniuses, I believe; but—here he comes. Don't mind his extravagances. You'll see the fun of them, now that you know something of the fellow."

By this time Bull returned, bearing in his hands the piggin of peach-brandy, for which he had gone to the bushes where it had been concealed. His salutation as he placed the vessel on the table, was calculated to justify in some sort the description which had been just given of his eccentricities.

"Here, you b—hes," he cried aloud—"here's stuff enough, and sorts enough, if your stomach's not too swingy proud for an honest liquor. This peach is a beauty, and the whiskey's as lovely as a sinner alongside of it. If you don't like one, take the other, and if you don't like neither, mix'em and swig both, and see which end'll come uppermost. Blast my buttons—what do you wait for, you—"

We omit the more decided expressions of blackguardism.

"You see," whispered Jones to the actor, "he's as full of Aristophanes as an egg's full of meat. Fond of all the old comic writers, and don't stand at calling things by plain names. You'll know more of him directly."

Horsey drew a long breath as he replied—

"'Gad! he is the strangest fellow—"

His speech and words were briefly cut short by the uproarious challenge of the eccentric Bull, who, having filled a tin mug of more than usual dimensions with one of the two potent beverages so highly eulogized, extended his gracious permission.

after a fashion of his own, to all others who might be disposed to follow his example.

"I'm a man that has a notion that all sperrits loses that stands too long open to the air. You must pour it down or cork it up, one or t'other, and so, fellows, I drinks to you, and my sentiments is—here's to the tongue that never sticks in the way of the swallow—meaning no harm to them that stands off talking, when they might be doing a better business."

And with these words, and a scornful leer at the actor and his companion Jones, the Grecian humorist, turned the bottom of the can to the north star, while the mouth of it clung for an instant to his own with a sympathetic tenacity.

"Well said! Well hit!" exclaimed the ready Jones, with a wink, to Horsey. "We certainly deserve the censure of all good spirits, when we leave such good spirits untasted. Horsey, my dear fellow, shall I pour you out from the jug or the piggin? I can answer for this peach—it's as good as any of Crumbaugh's."

"The peach, I thank you," was the answer of Horsey, in somewhat subdued accents. The fact is, his genius was confounded in the presence of that of Mr. Aristophanes Bull, of whom, as yet, he could not exactly succeed in reconciling what he saw with what he heard. A little time after, and he grew more flexible; but let us not anticipate. His glass was filled, and with the kindest condescension in the world, he bowed to the company ere he drank, and uttered some commonplace compliment, which was lost, like many better wishes, in the unheeding air.

"And now, gentlemen, give attention—now for the part of Hamlet by Mr. Horsey, of whom you all have heard, and by whose counsel and example, I trust we shall all improve. Mr. Horsey, perhaps that part about actors and acting—I mean the advice to the players—might be the best to begin with; unless, indeed, you should prefer to give us some more tragic parts. I know that your forte lies in tragedy."

Such was the conciliatory prelude of the adroit Jones, and its effect promised to be exceedingly happy upon the person to whom it was addressed. A smile rose upon his lips, his eyes sparkled, as he felt the convincing deference of the speaker,

and a ray of self-complaisance, such as the sun sheds over the western heavens, after he has done a good day's work of illumination, gave to our actor's face an inexpressible benignity of beam, which was most unhappily overcast, in another instant, by the intrusive comments of the eccentric genius, Bull.

"Tragedy be d——d," said he, striking his hand down upon the table, to which, in the next moment, he elevated his foot; "tragedy be d——d—that's all in my eye and Betty Martin. There's no fun in that, no more than in-thunder and hoxy-doxy. Who wants to see a fellow get up and blow out his cheeks, and roll up his eyes, and growl and roar and choke, and shake all over as if he had an agy? None of your tragedy for me. There's no sense in it. 'Tain't raal. I was once down in Mobile, when I saw them making tragedies, and, darken my peepers, but the bloody b——hes made me mad enough to swallow 'em, they were so cussed rediculous."

"But, my dear Bull," was the beginning, thrice begun, of our friend Jones, in the endeavor to stop the torrent of the humorist. In vain—Bull kept his ground, and shook off the intruder with as much ease as a three-year-old colt would shake off a Connecticut cavalry officer.

"Oh, be d——d," said he, "don't I know? There was a tragedian that came in looking after his enemy. He had his sword out, and he made a show as if he was mighty angry, but, between you and me, he didn't want to find him, no how. The other fellow was hiding behind a tree, and this chap looked for him everywhere but there. So, as I wanted to see how they'd fight, I up and told him where to look for him—says I, bung up my peepers, if you don't find him agin that rock, squat, jist hiding behind that tree. It was a scrub oak, or something like it—I never seed sich a tree before. Well, instead of thanking me, he dropped his jaws and his sword, looked at me as if he'd seed a ghost, mumbled something in his throat, nobody could tell what, and then there was a spree among the people, and some of the larks below cried out as if they were gwine to lick me. 'Lick and be d——d,' says I, 'lick if you can. Where's the first man?—let me look on him.' So up I stands, and devil the bit of a nigger among 'em to say another word. Well, that was all bloody foolish. If the chap was in a'rnest, it was

the easiest thing to find the other. He had only to say I'm ready, clap his hips and crow like a chicken, and if they was ser'ous, what more? But tragedies ain't ser'ous things. It' all make-b'lieve. They know there's nobody to be hurt,—nobody's in a'rnest; for they'll stand and talk for a long quarter, though the enemy's at the door, with bullet and bowie-knife; and they pretending to be mighty scared all the time. Then they hide where it's so easy to find 'em. Grim! only let a nigger hide from me in Loosa-Chitta as them fellows hide from one another in tragedies, and how soon I'd ride through his rig'lets. I'd be into 'em, and on 'em; over 'em, and through 'em; round 'em, and about 'em; front 'em, and a-back 'em; in the twinkle of a musquito—race-lightning never could go quicker. No! no! None of your tragedies for me."

"But, Bull, my dear fellow!" expostulated Jones, with something more of anxiety in his accents and manner, as he saw the almost pallid expression of discomfiture in the blank visage of Horsey—"why should you go on so? Though you don't like tragedy, that's no reason why other people should not, and we who labor for the public, or propose to do so, must do that which will best please the public. Now, there's no doubt that most people prefer tragedy—"

"The more fools they!" stoutly replied the obdurate Bull. "They're not of my kidney, then, by hocus; and I reckon there's none of the boys here that wouldn't prefer a sup of whiskey at any time, and a frolic at Mother Surgick's, to all the tragedy stuff."

"But, Bull, my dear fellow—" Jones resumed his expostulations, but in vain. Bull had been supping whiskey for a good hour before Horsey had reached the camp, and had grown too inflexible to engage with readiness in any scheme so intricate as the one proposed.

"Butt Bull," he retorted, using the language of Jones, with a grin, as if a good joke lay at the bottom—"Butt Bull, and get the worst of it. See whose head's the hardest, you b—h, and be off with your mug broken. It's a bad chance to butt any of my breed. No, blast my buttons! hide and horns, head and tail, are all too much for such as you, Jones; so no rearing, unless you want to come down on your haunches."

"A wit, you see," said Jones, in a whisper to the waiting Hamlet—"a fellow of infinite humor;—and as he's a little drunk he begins to show it. The true nature always comes up-permost with a man in liquor. A fellow of contradictions—we must bear with him a while longer."

There was little or no consolation in all this for the actor. He began to suspect that the organization of such an unruly gang would task the best manager in the worst fashion. He saw treason, uproar, and utter discomfiture in all the proceedings of the green-room. But he said nothing in reply to Jones, and before the latter could say more, the sarcastic Bull had resumed the subject of which he seemed as tenacious as the grave.

"Now," he said, "if you're for acting at all, give me them funny things, where they make all sorts of faces, and play tricks, and tumble one another about, and jump on shoulders and ride like monkeys, and run up the chimney, and hide behind the door. Give me the comedies and farces, and them sort of things that make a fellow laugh to split. I'm for the frolicking plays, and I reckon we're all for them. Ain't you, Baker?"

"Ay, deuce take me, if I don't vote with Bull," was the response of Mr. Baker.

"And I too," said another.

"And I," said a third.

And the majority sent up an assenting voice which put a stop for an instant to all the expostulations of the indefatigable Jones. Bull looked round him with an air of triumph and complacency, as much as to say,—there, you have our decision, so let your tragedy be comedy—your fate, fun! He filled up his can, as the difficult question was thus determined to his own satisfaction; and, as if to reconcile the minority to a decision which is always disagreeable to a minority, he proposed a bumper all round.

"Come Jones, come Doughty," so he named Horsey, "my dogs, we'll begin the fun by a full swallow. I'm always for a frolic when there's good stuff to go upon; and a comedy, says I, because a comedy's always serious a'rnest, and it's all my eye when they makes tragedies. Tragedies is mighty foolish

and ridiculous things. They ain't ser'ous. The killing ain't ser'ous. I don't reckon a man was ever yet killed in a tragedy. Now, I'm for killing in a'rnest when I set about it. I don't leave off when I begin, and if I once put knife into a fellow's ribs to make small meat of him, wouldn't I be a blasted fool to go off, before I made sure that the thing was done in right a'rnest? I'd git on him astraddle and feel at his kidneys; and if there was only the littlest shaking of the flesh, d—me but I'd give him another dig or two to make sure and put him out of his misery. I would, d—me."

There was something exceedingly literal in the latter part of Bull's speech, which our friend Horsey found it very difficult to account for. It seemed to him that the witty fellow was confounding real events with theatrical illusion; and the idea of his bestraddling his slain opponent, and giving him a thrust extra seemed rather Choctaw-like and savage. Besides, he could not understand how such a proceeding should ever be tolerated by an audience. On this head he thought it important to express his doubts. This he did, however, with less than his usual fecund flow of language, and with a hesitancy of manner which showed how greatly the eccentric genius of Bull had cowed himself, no less than the rest of his companions.

"I am afraid, Mr. Bull, the spectators would not permit such an unnecessary proceeding. The moment the man lies, apparently dead, the end of the performance is obtained. There is surely no sort of necessity to repeat the blow; and I am afraid that the dignity of tragedy would be utterly overthrown by bestraddling the slain man. I am also disposed to think—"

"Look you, Doughty, my boy," cried Bull, with an air of most paternal superiority, clapping his open hand as he spoke over the mouth of the tragedian—"you're but a young hand at the hatchet, I see. Do you think," with an air of great seeming circumspection, as he bent his mouth to the ear of the hearer, and spoke in a half-whisper—"you talk of spectators, but do you think I'd be such a blasted b—h of a fool as to let anybody see me at the business?"

"How! how! the audience not see you?"

The actor was bewildered. Jones, with some consternation interposed. The game at cross-purposes, which he had

so cunningly introduced, was on the verge of a sudden termination.

"Ha, ha! A good joke—an excellent joke!" he exclaimed aloud, laughing immoderately as he spoke—"Bull, you're a born devil of a joker. He's trying to quiz you, Mr. Horsey—I warned you how 'twould be—a very Momus, sir—all fun, all mirth, all deviltry."

"Quiz me!" exclaimed the actor, with a genuine expression of tragedy—a sublime indignation—in his countenance as he spoke, which, in an instant after, changed to one of haughty defiance, as his eyes turned from Jones to the person of him to whom had been ascribed the impertinent effort which promised to be so offensive.

"Nay, take no offence, Mr. Horsey, don't you see the man's drunk," said Jones, in a whisper. "But I'll mend his manners—I'll lead him off for a while, and cool him. I'll say that which will bring him to his senses."

"Tell him you'll discharge him!" said Horsey, with all the terrors of a managerial countenance, as he whispered this severe counsel in the ears of the other. "By the body of Polonius, it would be impossible to keep such a fellow in order—all his merits, were they twice what they are, could never reconcile me to tolerate such presumption."

"You are right, perfectly right, sir, and I'll make him hear to reason," said Jones—"meanwhile, sir, when I take him off, do you occupy the rest. They are very anxious to hear you—very good fellows, sir—a little tainted with Bull only. They will keep order."

While this brief dialogue proceeded between the two in whispers, the eccentric Bull had glided, by a very natural transition, from the proscenium into the orchestra, and was leading off, in a dithyrambic, famous among the beagles of the borders, to the air of the "Raccoon skinned"—a melody which only needs the lyrical genius of General Morris, who quelled the rioters of New York in 1834, to marry to universal song, and embalm, with other "refrains," in the cedar oil of immortality. We shall copy it out, when more at leisure, for the special benefit of that gentleman; at present, a single verse must suffice, as well for him, as for our amateur.

"Bish war ben it dan it nee
 Blit nel de mor ;
 So ma nol, it cal a fe,
 —Chi, cha, cho, chow,
 Tra la chin, et car it lee,
 —Chi, cha, cho, chow,
 Blit nel de mor,"—etc.

"Bull, a word with you," said Jones, abruptly, as the uproarious ditty was ended.

"Well, out with it, and be d——d to you. If it's only one, the pain's soon over."

"Come with me."

"Why can't you out with it here? D——n my sixes! There's no use to get up while one's able, and there's any stuff left. See here."

"Let it rest! It'll wait till you come back."

"I don't know that," retorted the humorist—"and though it might, these d——d fellows won't—they swallow like a sand-hill after a long drought in August. I'm almost afraid to leave it. If I go now, it's like parting with a friend for ever."

"Pshaw, Bull—what nonsense. There's business, I tell you."

These words, coupled with a particular and significant movement of the hands which escaped Horsey's observation, at once had an effect upon the person addressed. He rose, grumbling all the while, and followed his companion, leaving the field to our actor, who, like long-pent-up torrents, glad of the moment of liberation, soon burst with all his thunders upon the remaining assembly, and strove to make up for lost time by redoubled efforts. He was beginning to forget his previous annoyances in the evident attention of his audience, when Jones and the refractory Bull reappeared.

The latter was somewhat sullen, but he remained silent for awhile, contenting himself with refilling his glass, and resuming his seat as before. He stuck his legs boldly upon the table, crossed his arms as if in contemplation, and, not deigning a glance at our actor, fixed his eyes upon the heavens, tracing Boötes, Orontes, and the rest, with a face of particular and philosophical speculation, and, possibly, discoursing in fancy with that

venerable old gentleman of nursery authority, the ancient and ever to be remembered man in the moon—his dog and his bush. Thus he sat for some time in dogged silence, while our actor, who needed but little encouragement to rouse every echo known to the tragic muse, having already gone through several passages, proceeded to Macbeth.

The soliloquy in the dagger-scene, being one upon which every witling labors to expend himself, was that which tasked all his powers; and whether he did well or ill, or whether it was because of some affinities in the passage which came home to the bosom and the business of Bull, it is certain that our actor's declamation in this part was honored with a greater share of his attention than he had condescended to bestow previously. This did not escape the notice of Horsey, and he was beginning to congratulate himself that the eccentricities of the genius were about to pass away, leaving his lights their accustomed brilliance, when the grateful anticipation was suddenly defeated by the latter's starting to his feet, and thrusting his mug, well filled with the generous potation, full in the face of the actor, exclaiming, while he did so, and cutting off entirely the closing lines of the part—

"Oh, d—n it, Thompson, take a drink and shut up. This tragedy stuff is too dry and dull—let's have no more of it. Here, drink, and let your tongue have a bit of a holyday."

The indignant actor could no longer restrain himself. His hand, which had been extended to grasp the imaginary dagger, was swept round in the twinkling of an eye, and the next moment the vessel was seen flying in the air, liberally bestowing its contents in its flight, upon the face and bosom of the circle, among which the portion of Mr. Bull was in no manner stinted. This proceeding was the signal for an uproar, and Bull's hand was already laid upon the collar of Macbeth, whose blood was still rising, when the sudden appearance of another personage upon the scene, produced an instantaneous change in its circumstances.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SIDDONS OF THE SWAMP—PASSION AND CUNNING AT ODDS

“Ay, answer that,
The questioner hath need—where went he then?”
The Royal Fugitive.

THE effect upon the group of the sudden appearance of a single person was no less strange than instantaneous. And this person was a woman. She emerged from the edge of the little nook, near which the revel had been carried on, and stood, without speaking a syllable, for several seconds, looking upon the circle with an expression of high-raised scorn in her countenance, which, though beheld only by the ruddy blaze of firelight, seemed to the eyes of our actor to be haughtily beautiful. Her complexion was dark, but richly lustrous. Her hair black as midnight, and glossy almost as its stars. Her eyes were large, quick, and dazzling, of the same deep raven hue with her tresses, which hung down upon her shoulders, streaming from beneath a sable network, which, covering her head, partially concealed her forehead also. Her person was rather masculine—her carriage majestic—and the involuntary notion which rose in the mind of Horsey, as he beheld her, was that she would make a most magnificent Lady Macbeth.

Somewhat ashamed of being caught by a lady in a hand-to-hand scuffle with a genius like Benjamin Bull, our actor drew off from his opponent, who, to his surprise, exhibited an equal degree of willingness with himself to bring the contest to a sudden conclusion. He slunk away, and, with an evolution no less prompt than unlooked for, actually took shelter behind Horsey, surveying the intruder with eyes of cat-like cunning, mingled with some little apprehension, from over the shoulder of the actor. The effect upon the rest of the revellers was very nearly

the same. In a moment they had left the board; and one or two, who were nearest to the woods, might have been seen stealing out of sight into the shadow of the contiguous trees. Jones was the only one of all the assembly who maintained his former place, and exhibited neither apprehension nor confusion. He met the gaze of the lady with respectful firmness, and, as he passed our actor in approaching the spot where she stood, whispered in his ears:—

“Our prima donna—our heroine—a star of the first magnitude. But—mum!”

His finger touched his nose, and his air and gesture were that of one whose words, had they been supplied, would have been:—

“But a Tartar of the first degree.”

Horsey fancied such to be the meaning of the other’s gestures, and was half confirmed in this opinion, when the first accents fell from the lips of the intruder.

“Mr. Jones, I would speak with you a moment.”

“Certainly, ma’am—I will but give some directions to the gentlemen, and follow you.”

“Gentlemen!” was the half-subdued utterance of the lady, in tones of scornful irony. “Gentlemen, indeed!”

The words came faintly to the ears of Horsey, who stood, with Jones, somewhat in advance of the rest; and, however little complimentary to himself and his companions, he could forgive the sneer which they expressed, in consideration of the intense superiority of manner which accompanied their utterance, and which assured him that the company was not entirely without a redeeming measure of that talent for theatricals, the want of which had hitherto appeared painfully conspicuous in his eyes, in spite of the obvious genius of Mr. Benjamin Bull and the flattering judgment of Mr. Jones. The lady turned on her heel, without further word or look, disappearing in the recess of the woods, as suddenly as she came.

“So, Bull,” said Jones, reproachfully, when she had gone, “it’s just as I told you. Mark me—you haven’t heard the end of it. I warned you, but you must be drinking; and all that I said by way of counsel has been wasted upon you. She’s heard all the uproar, and seen it too, and she will tell *him* every syl-

lable when he comes. She will forget nothing. You know that."

"Ay, ay—blast it—she has the memory of a devil's dam. Well, there's no help now—I must grin and and bear it," said the genius, sullenly.

"At least, it will be wise only to do no more mischief for the night. Away, all of you, to your nests; and no more uproar. There's no telling how soon *he* will be here, and if he finds you—"

The speech was finished in a whisper to the parties immediately interested, and lost accordingly to our amateur. He had heard enough, however, to perceive that there was some mystery connected with his companions, some matter of domestic history, which was yet withheld from him. Who was "*he*" of whom Jones had spoken so emphatically, yet left unnamed; and why should a woman, however great might be her merits as a player, maintain an influence over the company, of such seemingly tyrannical extent—a tyranny which, from their spontaneous recognition of its sway, would seem to have been of habitual and undisputed exercise? The approach of Jones arrested his cogitations.

"This path, Mr. Horsey, will lead you to your place of sleeping for the night. You will there find fire-light, and a boy waiting you. I will join you before you sleep."

"But, Mr. Jones—the lady—who is she?"

"Our great gun—our princess—a most royal heroine. You see what a magnificent carriage she has?—she is tremendously popular—wins applauses wherever she goes—our trump-card which always secures the game. But she knows it, sir—that's the misfortune. She knows her popularity too well, and she is capricious in consequence. We have to humor her, sir, in all her fancies, and some of them are strange enough. You have no idea how extravagant she can be at times. Exercises the most tyrannous authority, and we dare not offend her."

"I'd like to know her. Suppose I go with you? You can introduce me, and, by the ghost of Garrick, Mr. Jones, to have a chat with such a woman will only be a proper compensation for the annoyances I have had to undergo from that d——d comedian—that fellow Bull, of whom you think so highly."

“Not now—not for the world to-night. She’s in her fit to-night, and would fly at you like a tigress. To-morrow, or the next day, Mr. Horsey, as soon as the fit passes off. I’ll tell you when she’s in the humor to be seen.”

“Do, do—I long to know her. She looks as if she’d make a first-rate woman. But of whom did you speak when you threatened Bull with the anger of some person whom you did not name?”

“Oh, that was her husband—our chief musician. A bloody fellow, by the way, of whom Bull has a monstrous terror. He came nigh cutting Ben’s throat once already, for some liberties he took with his wife, and since then we know how to keep him in order. We have only to say ‘*he* is coming’—meaning the husband—and the fellow’s tail’s down in an instant. He loses all his wit and humor, and skulks off, as he did to-night, out of sight and hearing, a most thorough-paced coward, as ever you saw. But I must leave you. Our princess is as jealous as her husband; and as I am acting manager at present, I must be careful how I offend her. Your path lies there. I will look in upon you as soon as I am dismissed from her presence.”

Horsey, somewhat bewildered, followed the path which had been pointed out to him, while Jones proceeded to join the empress whose dictatorial summons he really did not dare to disobey. The spot in which she received him was not far distant from that which the revellers had occupied. It was more thickly garnished with trees and shrubbery—more closely encircled by the swamp-thicket, and, in place of a rude tent of bushes, such as served the rest of the company, a log-house was provided for her ladyship, rude and clumsy, it is true, but comparatively full of comforts, and not without its attractions. Deference, if not affection, seemed to have striven to gratify her pride, and commend itself to her consideration. A little arbor was raised before her door upon which the wild grape clambered; and rose-bushes had been planted along the path, which was neatly shorn of weeds and made free of all obstructions. Within the cottage the same care might have shown itself, in a hundred little particulars, but we need not waste our attention upon details.

The lady met Jones at the entrance, and, without a word, led the way into the dwelling. Her manner betrayed no little impatience.

"You have been slow, Mr. Jones. I heard of your arrival some hours ago, and have been expecting your presence ever since."

"I had a particular charge ma'am, which kept me busy. We had a stranger to manage, and—"

"Ay, ay—some other hopeful scheme—but I care not to listen to the small details of some new villany. My desire is to know where you left Saxon. That you have seen him, I know—that you must have seen him within a day, I am convinced. What I desire to know is, where you saw him last, and when I am to expect him here."

"Really, ma'am, it would be very difficult—nay, almost impossible—for me to answer all these inquiries. You know, quite as well as I do, the danger that our captain incurs at this moment—nay, at every moment, and—"

"Pshaw, Mr. Jones—you speak as if you thought me a fool, or doubted my prudence and fidelity. Is it likely, do you think, that I shall prove a traitor to Edward Saxon? or is there any probability that I shall deal in the small tittle-tattle of my sex, and, with its usual vanity, reveal, with unconscious stupidity, what I know, to those who might do him hurt? You know me better—you would evade my inquiries."

"On my honor, ma'am—"

"None of that—none of that. Leave off your long preambles, and answer my question. When did you see your captain last, and where? I repeat, I know that you have seen him within the last two days—where was it, and what was the precise time?"

"Perhaps, ma'am, you have more knowledge at this moment of the captain's movements than myself. He has not confided to me any particulars but those which had connection with the tasks upon which he has set me, and which I was endeavoring to execute at the very moment when you came out upon the bayou."

The woman looked upon the speaker with a degree of intense earnestness in her glance which savored of a rising anger.

Her dark eyes gleamed with the fires of a gathering thunder-storm, while a smile of ineffable scorn, that seemed like its softer lightnings, passed over her thin and ruddy lips.

“Mr. Jones, you look upon me as upon a child, with whom you may trifle at pleasure. Why do you talk to me of your duties, and of your efforts to execute them? I do not doubt your diligence, nor am I a miserable spy to watch your performance of them. I ask a simple answer in reference to the movements of another—your captain, sir!”

“Yes, ma’am, but you know my oath. I am forbidden—”

“What! to communicate with me? Has he then forbidden you? Ah! has it come to that—does he fear that I should know? Are his doings of such a character? An outlaw to society, is he faithless also to me?—and you—you, sir, know, and are forbidden to declare. It is well, sir—very well—it is exactly what I thought—exactly. You may go, sir—go! I ask you not to betray your leader, sir—keep his secrets—conceal his perjuries—cloak his excesses—you are both worthily employed—both. Fear not, I shall do you justice to your captain. You may go now. I have done with you. I have no more questions.”

This speech was spoken with an impetuosity which defied all interruption. The torrent of passion convulsed the frame of the speaker—fired her eyes—made her cheeks glow with the tempestuous blood that coursed through her veins with the fierce rush of a stream that no longer knows its limits—but offered no interruption to her accents, while her feet traversed the little floor of the cabin, with every sentence which she uttered, arrested only at the close of each when she stopped to confront the hearer with her flashing eyes.

“Madam,” said Jones, when her pause suggested to him an opportunity for reply, “what will you have me say or do? I am commanded to obey you.”

“Yet forbidden to answer my questions.”

“No, madam; only on such subjects as concern the movements of the beagles.”

“Ay, that is the pretence. You know that I care to know nothing of your movements, or of any movements which merely affect your schemes of plunder, and when I would ask of *him*.

I am answered by a reference to your oath What has your oath to do with his movements?"

"He is one of us—his movements are those of the beagles.

"You will not answer me, Mr. Jones?"

"Madam, are you not already in possession of all the information which I can give you?" said Jones, significantly.

"What mean you, sir?"

"The dwarf—Stillyards."

"What of him? Has he returned?"

"He has, madam. He stood near the captain last night—so near that, had he been discovered, his life had been but little worth. Saxon would have put a bullet through his head had he known of his presence, and dreamed that he had been sent as a spy upon his actions."

"Ha! what mean you by calling him a spy—who sent him as a spy?"

"You, madam, should need no answer to that question. Enough, that I know that he was present—that he was present as a spy—and may reveal to you those matters which I dare not. Stillyards is already here, if you have not seen him; and has, probably, been so far successful that he is able to answer all your questions; as he has no such scruples as myself, he probably will do so. But, let me counsel you, madam, for your own sake, no less than that of our leader, that you employ that crooked scoundrel no farther in such matters. If discovered, Saxon will kill him, and, if not, he may pick up some secret of the leader, upon which his own life and the lives of all of us might depend. You do not know the evil which may follow this evil practice, for which, if you will permit me to declare, there can be no sort of necessity. Saxon, let me assure you, is as faithful to you as he is to us; and if ever mortal man loved woman, it is certain that he loves you."

"Ah, Mr. Jones," responded the woman in milder accents, "could I be sure of this; but the feeling of my own unworthiness, is one that always produces a doubt of his fidelity; and, if he loves me, as you say, why is it that I am now so constantly deserted?"

"Believe me, madam, it could not well be otherwise."

"Would I could believe you, Jones; would I could—but—

but—no matter. You will keep my secret, Jones—you will say nothing of what you know?”

“Why should I, madam?—it were of no use, unless it became necessary to prevent a repetition of a practice which endangers the lives of all. Stillyards must not be again employed in this business.”

“How, sir, do you command me?”

“No, madam, far be it from me to do so. But I take leave to counsel you; and to add, that my own knife should silence the dwarf for ever, should I again detect him in the position in which I encountered him last night.”

“Enough, sir,” replied the lady, proudly, “I shall take care that the lad encounters no such risks at your hands in future, and warn you, therefore, that I shall avenge any injury which your suspicions or your malice may prompt you to inflict upon him.”

“Malice, madam! it would be malice were I to declare to our captain what has passed between us. But you mistake me, madam; I have no malice against you, if for no other reason, because I sincerely love our leader.”

“Mr. Jones,” said the lady, “I requested you to say nothing to Saxon of what you know. I now amend my request, simply to beg that you will merely give me an opportunity of anticipating your communication to him of every particular relating to the spy, as you have been pleased to call the dwarf, in my employ. It shall never be said that Florence Marbois, whatever may be her errors and her vices, dreaded to speak the truth herself in the ears of the man she loved. I may have wronged him by my suspicions—but I will not wrong him so greatly as to yield to an underling any confidence, however unimportant, which I yet withheld from him. You may leave me now, sir.”

A faint smile passed over the features of Jones, as he left the apartment.

“Now, were I the malignant she has called me,” he uttered in low soliloquy as he entered the woods, “I should not forgive—certainly never forget—this bitter and foolish speech. It were no difficult matter to ruin her with Saxon for ever. But what use? A woman, in all her pride and glory, is something like a

soap-bubble after all. She glitters and floats in air for a while, is decked with all the colors of the rainbow, but you see through her all the time, and she bursts at last. I pity Florence—she has many excellent qualities, and, but for the convulsive jealousy of her temper, would be as amiable as she is lovely. She will break some day, and cover us with lather. It will be our care to see that she does not blind our eyes with the soap.”

With this effort at small philosophy and smaller wit, the outlaw proceeded to the hut of the wandering actor. His place was supplied, in the presence of the lady, by the dwarf, Stillyards, who made his appearance the moment after the departure of the other. He had evidently continued his occupation of the spy, and had listened to the whole conference between them. With a grin, which had in it as much malice as delight, he prefaced his revelations to the lady by some natural remarks upon what he had heard; but was surprised at receiving a rebuke for his ill-timed impertinence.

“To your business, Stillyards! you saw the captain—he was well?”

This question answered to her satisfaction, she dismissed him without further inquiry, betraying, in the novel forbearance which she manifested, the influence had upon her mind by the serious caution which Jones had given her. The importance of the dwarf was in no small degree lessened by this course of proceeding.

“A fool’s journey, indeed,” he muttered to himself as he went, “if I’m not to use what I went for. But I’ll pick a hole in both their coats when they’re least a-thinking. I’ve a word to open madam’s ears whenever I choose it, and I’ll speak it too, sooner than lose my best business. The only good shares I gits comes from my lady, and if she stops hearing, she’ll stop paying. Well, it’ll cost ’em both a great deal more in the end; and if I don’t git nothing by it, I’ll git satisfaction. I’ll show ’em that the broken back that makes ’em laugh, can make ’em cry too; and if I only gits my laugh for my pains—well, that’s something.

CHAPTER XXX

TERRIBLE EVENTS—HAMLET BECOMES COMMON WEAR—THE
OUTLAW—THE HEROINE.

“And he had learned to love—I know not why,
For this, in such as him, seems strange of mood!”

* * * * *

“And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
Which unto his was bound in stronger ties
Than the church binds withal.”—*Childe Harold*.

JONES, when he returned to the woodland cover which had been assigned to Horsey as his sleeping apartment, discovered the worthy actor half undressed, squat upon the turf, and looking around him with a countenance in which consternation might be said to be the prevailing expression.

“Why, what’s the matter, Mr. Horsey?” demanded the outlaw.

“Matter, sir,” returned the other, “matter enough.”

“How! you seem alarmed—you seem angry.”

“Not alarmed, but cursedly astounded, and, as you say, a little angry. Mr. Jones, I’m cursedly afraid that this company of yours will not exactly answer.”

“How, sir?”

“They lack moral, sir,” was the reply of Horsey, in lower tones, and something more of caution in his manner.

“Indeed,” said the other, “what leads you to this conclusion?”

“Nay, let me not do injustice to all, when the offence may be that of one only. Would you believe it sir?—my clothes are stolen!”

“Can it be possible?”

“Not only possible, but true. They are gone, sir—a tolerable new coat—blue cloth, gilt buttons, with velvet collar, and

silk lining—two shirts—pants, a sort of pepper-and-salt, very fine though, with figured braid front and broad edging—vest, fine satin, a little frayed at the right pocket, double buckles in the back, no strings, and my name, written in India-ink on the lining, ‘Thomas Horsey, American Theatre, New Orleans,’ all in full. In the vest, a silver pencil-case, ever-pointed, without leads; in the pants, a penknife, toothpick, and comb; in the coat, a handkerchief and pocket Shakspeare, fine miniature, Cadell’s edition, London, much used, and with pencil-marks for reading, under emphasized passages. I would not take twenty dollars for the Shakspeare alone, to say nothing of the clothes.”

“Truly a very serious loss, if they be lost,” was the reply of Jones; “but I’m in hopes, Mr. Horsey, that they are only mislaid. Our profession, as you well know, calls for persons of nice honor in particular, and I should prefer believing any mischance sooner than the dishonesty of any of our men. Have you looked where you left them?”

“Everywhere.”

“Let us look again. It is too much to lose without some effort, and you may have overlooked them in the darkness of the night. Where did you lay them?”

“Here, on this very pole, and beneath these two trees; I changed my dress behind them. My saddlebags, you see, are safe, and that is fortunate, for my favorite costume, and the most costly, is within them. I have a Romeo there, sir, a Richard, two field-officers, a Mustapha, and other uncertain characters. My Hamlet, you see, I have on, and, egad, ‘motley’s my only wear’ now, unless I can recover the missing matters. The only citizen’s dress I had, is gone, and I should make a comical figure by daylight, in this dress of Denmark.”

“A noble figure you mean, sir—you never looked half so well in any dress in your life, Mr. Horsey, as in that,” was the reply, full of tones of admiration, which the outlaw made. It went consolingly to our actor’s heart, through the medium of his vanity; and the importance of his loss became a little lessened in his eyes.

“Upon my soul, continued the outlaw, with a successful gravity of countenance, while he affected to look for the missing articles, “were I you, Mr. Horsey, I should never desire any

other dress than that which you wore to-night. Your figure and general air, sir, suit admirably the costume of Hamlet."

"Do you really think so, Jones?"

"Indeed I do; your carriage was particularly fine—the union of royal dignity and profound human thought, which you contrived—I know not how—to throw into the countenance of the melancholy prince, was inimitable. The habitual sense of royalty was there—present always to the sight; and yet every movement of the lips, every turn of the body, every glance of the eye, subdued while graceful, and full of signification while most easy, seemed to say, with the preacher, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' Your Hamlet, sir, seemed to denote, what he must have felt always, that he was the victim of the destinies."

"That is a good idea, Mr. Jones—a devilish good idea—a correct notion of the character. I must confess I never thought that before, though, certainly, I must have felt it, if my personation was correct. I must read the play more closely—I must renew my studies. D—n the fellow for stealing the book—the breeches he may have—can't you make it known without offending the company, Mr. Jones?—Say that the thief may have vest and breeches, returning me my Shakspeare and the coat?"

The result of the search, in spite of the liberal offer which Horsey had made, was unsatisfactory. The worthy actor was compelled to wear his professional costume in common, and the merriment which his appearance by daylight occasioned among the outlaws, whom he was still persuaded to regard as brethren—fellows of the sock and buskin—may be more easily conjectured than described. Not that he himself was suffered to become conscious of the fun which he inspired. Jones had his object in preserving order, and was successful in curbing the open expression of that mirth which was felt on every side as the actor strutted among them—perhaps not so much dissatisfied with his losses, as pleased with the opportunity of appearing so often in character, to a person who, like Jones, seemed to behold his display with so much unction, and with such a laudable desire to profit by his exhibitions. It would have been easy to have kept the actor some time longer in so pleasant a

captivity, had it been the object of the outlaws to have done so. It was only necessary on the part of their leader to hint a desire that the phlegmatic, yet fanciful Hamlet—a Jacques under different aspects of fortune—should become the proud and passionate Moor for a season; and Horsey, whatever might have been his rising suspicions of his companions, would have dismissed them on the instant that he put on the habit of Othello. Vanity is one of the most unsuspicious of all moral objects. The ear that is open only to praise seems to acquire its intense eagerness at the expense of the other perceptive faculties. The eye is closed to the sneer that lurks about the lips of irony—and a general obtuseness of the judgment, in all but the leading desire of the mind, distinguishes that moral gourmand, for whom toiling Flattery—a creature that is base in proportion to the folly which it feeds—ministers its spurious sweets, that, perhaps, only do not satiate, because they are so utterly unsubstantial. But let us not anticipate. It will not be necessary here to say how long Horsey remained in the neighborhood of Cane Castle, or what were the events that subsequently befell him. Let us finish with the night in which he lost his inexpressibles, and in which we have still something more to do, and some other parties to produce.

After devoting considerable time, and a reasonable degree of effort, for the recovery of the lost wardrobe, Jones left the actor to his sylvan couch, while he returned to his own—a shelter of twigs, bark, and bushes, some fifty yards distant. The actor soon slept, to dream of parts and persons, in the assumption of which the loss of his own garments could not have been seriously felt. Sleep soon overcame the outlaw also; and it was only after several shakes of the shoulder that the latter was awakened from his slumbers by a stranger at his side.

“Ha! captain—you!” he exclaimed, when fully aroused, and starting to his feet as he distinguished the face and form of his visiter in the dim starlight.

“Yes,” was the answer in the tones of Saxon. “Have you found your man?”

“He is here—we have played the game so far with tolerable success.”

“You have the clothes then?”

"Yes—coat, vest, and breeches."

"That is well. Let them be well blooded; put a knife and bullet hole in the breast and body, and send them off with the first peep of morning to Nawls. Keep up the game with this silly fellow a few days longer, and I will then give you orders what to do with him. He is unsuspecting of the truth?"

"Quite."

"That is well—keep him so—but do not suffer yourself to be deceived. He may play in characters more troublesome to a good beagle than Othello or Macbeth. You were careful to take him along the cross paths to the swamp?"

"Ay, sir—it would puzzle him to find his way out again without help; but he will not seek to do so while we hold to our theatrical purposes, and this we can safely do for a reasonable space longer. Do you leave the castle to-morrow?"

"To-night. I will but see Florence first, and excuse myself for another flight."

"That is only a proper caution, sir. She needs it."

"How! Have you seen her?" demanded Saxon with some anxiety.

"She came out upon us while we were drenching the boys in the very height of our play with the actor."

"Ha!—well! The old passion, I suppose?" inquired the outlaw, with some disquiet in his tones. "Would she were safely in Orleans again. What did she come for?"

"To summon me to the castle—to make inquiries after you—your whereabouts—your objects—the cause of your delay."

"Jealous, suspicious woman!—I must cure her of this; but the task is not so easy. She has a furnace in her veins that maddens her. Her brain is all fire and suspicion, and her heart—but I must forgive her all, since her madness grows out of a love, which is as little qualified and doubtful as her jealousy. And yet, Heaven keep me from such a passion as hers—to be its object even is a terror. It would consume while it worships—and still enslaves by the intensity of its regards. There is no tyranny like that which never suffers you from under its eye."

The conference between the two outlaws was continued for a brief space longer, but as it involved matters which have no

connection with our narrative, it needs no record here. When they separated, Jones resumed his couch, while Saxon, passing through the narrow pathway already traversed by the reader, entered upon that densely-encircled area, on the edge of which stood the little cottage of his leman.

Florence Marbois—the young, the beautiful, the devoted—was a creole of Louisiana, whose parents were French, and who, dying of yellow fever in Orleans when she was yet a child, left her to the doubtful care of indifferent relatives, whose responsibility, however lightly it may have been felt, had been abruptly terminated by her clandestine flight to the arms of another guardian, from whose affection she had better hopes of those regards and that tenderness, which were so dear to one so adhesive as herself, and of which she had heretofore known so little. Edward Saxon—of whom she then knew nothing, but that he was noble in form, handsome in features, proud in spirit and intelligent in mind, far beyond the average of those intellects to which she had been accustomed—became her protector—her protector in that sense of the word which excludes her from all social consideration; and though it may most frequently have its origin in love, more certainly finds its termination in disgrace. She fled to his arms, and in the intoxication of a first dream of passion realized, she felt no rebukings of conscience—no compunctious visitings—no misgivings that the love which had prevailed over virtue would fail to survive its loss. But the heart which craved the affection which it has not often found, is of all others the most suspiciously watchful of that brief portion which fate allows it; and when, in process of time, the various employments of her lover, took him from her side, and kept him absent for days, and weeks, and sometimes months, Jealousy, that twin-passion of love, which, perhaps, must always be as active as its elder sister, particularly where the rights of the latter have been left unestablished by the legitimate authorities, grew no less violent than the flame of which it may be called the black and veiling smoke; and she who could dote, at one moment, with devotion, on the bosom of her seducer, soon showed him that she was not without the spirit to rise, at another, into rebellion and hostility. Her fits of passion annoyed and sometimes confounded him; and the first impulses having

subsided, which had led him, as fiercely fond as herself, to assume the charge of one so wild and violent, he sighed with something of regret as he looked back to a condition of freedom, which he now craved, but which he found himself utterly unable to restore. Though outlawed, he was not utterly abandoned, and his soul shrunk from the suggestions, which had never been self-prompted before, to rid himself, by a single act of brutality, from ties which, however sweet at first, had now become an encumbrance. Now, for the first time, however, dark resolves were self-offered to his mind; and ere he emerged from the wood which separated the encampment of the robbers from the arena in which the cottage of his mistress stood, he paused under their influence, and his lips parted in murmured soliloquy:—

“And why should it be borne longer?” he exclaimed—“why should I be the victim of eternal jealousies—a suspicion that haunts my footsteps—that watches my actions—that hangs like an incubus upon my heart? Can there be any wisdom in such patience? Shall it be that I, who have shaken off the fear with the love of man—who have bidden defiance to his power no less than to that of God—that I should yield up life and freedom—the enjoyment of other society which might in part console me for the loss of those which the outlaw must ever forfeit, in a base homage to one for whom I have no love—for whose claims, even lust now fails to offer any argument? Beautiful once—beautiful still—loving me as I believe thou hast done—Florence Marbois, thou art yet nothing in my sight. Thy love is persecution; and it is pity—pity only—which has made me, at great effort, wear a face, when I approached thee, of regard which I can no longer feel. I remember what thou wast when I first saw thee—when I first took thee in my arms that fatal night, when, in a boat which might have been a coffin to us both, the winds bore us over the Pontchartrain together—I remember what thou wast, and what I promised to thee then, and the memory of that night rises up to save thee and to soften me. But, can I always spare—can I always endure the tyranny which thy vain jealousies inflict? Is there reason why it should be borne—nay, is there not good reason now, why it should cease soon and for ever. It must—it shall! There is

a bound beyond which passion must not go—a limit where endurance stops, and forbearance becomes a shame as it has long before become a weariness. That bound is reached—that limit is overpassed; and the heart which now flows with all its streams to another, must soon be freed from thee. But for this I had borne with thee still longer—I had borne with thee in pity for thy youth—for that love even, which thou still bearest to one to whom it has been an annoyance for weary months, and to whom, unless checked in season, it must become a curse!”

He paused and looked around him, as if struck by approaching footsteps, but no one approached him. As if reassured, his words again broke forth in soliloquy—such soliloquy as denoted the doubts and indecision of a spirit, for the first time approaching a purpose of excessive guilt and danger. What he said tended to show that the woman whom his arts had betrayed, was about to be cast from his least regards; and nothing seemed to be wanting to the more fell and cruel resolution which would thrust her from his path, but that frequent contemplation of the subject, which reconciles the corrupted heart, step by step, to the last degree of crime. That this stage of wickedness had not yet been reached by the outlaw, was clear enough, by the frequent recurrence, in what he said, to that period in the history of their mutual fortunes, when the intercourse between them had been productive of equal pleasure to them both. So long as the memory may still look back with tenderness to the green garden-spots of youth, the heart is not utterly corrupt—there is still a part not yet ossified—a narrow, isolated spot, from which the springs of relieving pity may well up and soften, though they may not often heal, the rest.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DEATH OF PASSION—NEW PASSION FROM ITS ASHES

“Die all my fears,
And waking jealousies, which have so long
Been my tormentors; there’s now no suspicion.”—MASSINGER.

It was midnight, but Florence Marbois did not sleep. She sat beside the window, looking forth upon the various shadows of the night and forest. The scene was unspeakably sweet and soft, but it was also sad and mysterious. A faint murmur, like the distant moanings of a spirit at watch over the desolate abodes of youth and happiness, came to her ears through the subdued silence hanging over the scene. The shadows drooped, as if in kindred affliction, beneath the grave and brooding starlight. The gray cypresses rose up like spectres amidst the green foliage that grew thickly along the edges of the swamp, and looming forward in the dewy haze of midnight, seemed to harmonize with the melancholy aspects of the region. Nor was the voice of the water, as it rose from a brooklet that gurgled under the upbulging roots of a tree which it had partially detached from its foothold, without a fitting tone of sadness for the scene.

The heart of Florence felt the mysterious sympathies accorded by the unintelligent nature at her feet. Her head rested upon her palms as she looked forth and listened—her eyes, as if satisfied, strove not to pierce the dense maze of forest all around her; and while her lips murmured a complaint of solitude, such as seemed to be the burden of all voices, her cheeks were glistening with those holy dews which such beauty as hers—had she been still alive to social vanities—should not have regretted, since they served to crown beauty with the more prevailing charm of sweetness, and to consecrate to love the very sorrows in which their origin is found.

The heart of Florence was softened, but not at ease. Tears had brought relief—a brief respite from the gnawing discontent which preyed upon her heart—but not a cure—not a remedy. If she felt more at ease, it was the ease of one who has just drunk the soothing draught, and can only find relief while under its influence. Fancies, which are sometimes hopes in disguise, the ephemeræ of the soul, had been with her in momentary visitation; and, though vague, unstable, and illusive, they had at least diverted the grief which might else have overborne. True, they fly at last, but so do the angels; and who would refuse the blessing of the visit, in which the very air blossoms, through which they come, because of the conviction that they must fly with the morning? The heart that has been full of sorrow, should be the last to speculate unnecessarily upon the always unprofitable future.

Unfortunately, the hopes of Florence had not been wise hopes, for they had not been good ones. She loved unworthily—she had sinned—she lacked the securities of virtue, and had no confidence in that of others. Her hopes, based upon the probable truth of her lover, were idly founded. They were made to rest upon his tastes, his passions, her own powers of pleasing, her frail and fading charms, and her undisguised attachment for him. They had not been placed where, to be secure, all affections must be placed—upon her own just claims to respect, and upon the inflexible principles of truth in the man to whom her affections had been given.

Her lover—so she once held him—had raised his hand in defiance to society, in the rigid exercise of whose laws the only security of woman may be found; and her appeal for justice now lay to his passions and caprices alone—to passions which constant provocation made active and imperious—to caprices that fluctuated with an appetite more peevish with every indulgence, and more recklessly resolved with every denial.

But Florence Marbois was a creature of impulses, not of thought; and, if there were moments in which she estimated correctly her miserable condition of dependence, such thoughts were soon driven away as intruders, by the gentle accent, the kindly solicitude—not often shown in the latter days of her heart's history—which the pity of her betrayer vouchsafed to

bestow, in return for that increasing homage and devoted love—shown even in its most jealous frenzies—which she had never ceased to feel for him from the first hour of their ill-appointed union.

And, sitting beside the window of that rude hovel, alone, in the deep mazes of an uncultivated forest—the savage almost at her side—a band of outlaws at her feet—midnight gathering, vague, wild, indistinct, and mysterious around her:—the play-mates of youth—the friends of maturity—the social and kindly world in which she had lived—all banished from her sight—all lost, and, probably, lost for ever:—still, she thought of no privation—she knew of no loss—she dreamed of no evil—no—no danger—nothing to make her doubt—nothing to make her dread—she thought only of him! Where was he? When would he come? Was he still true? Did he still love her as before?

Could she have found a grateful answer to these questions, her heart might have been pacified. She would have asked no other questions—no other fortune from the hands of Fate.

Such is love—that thing of greatest dependence—of greatest strength and weakness. Strong above all powers for endurance—weak beyond all moral supports, when it knows not where to confide, and can not command the sympathy which it ever seeks, and without which it is little better than a flower cast upon the unreturning waters, and borne with feeble struggles to the wide ocean, where it is swallowed up. Strong, vigorous, climbing, triumphant, and beautiful, like the vine, when the gigantic tree suffers its embraces; but wretched, sinking, and perishing, prostrate upon the earth, when, throwing out its tendril-arms for the support to which it was destined, and without which it can not live, it grasps only the unsubstantial air, and perishes at last in feeble despondency upon the damp and noisome ground, from which it has ever sought to rise.

In the cold world how many affections spread forth their arms, seeking, but in vain, to clasp themselves around the rugged nature which they would adorn and beautify—failing in this, that perish upon the spot which gave them birth but denied them sustenance—putting forth no fruits, bearing no flowers, yet beautiful while they lived—so beautiful in promise, that the

heart can not help but weep, for its own sake, that they were denied all fruition.

The tears were yet on the cheeks of Florence, when Saxon entered the apartment. He entered it unobserved. Her face was yet turned upon the forest; her thoughts were far distant; and in the absence of her thoughts, her present senses had become obtuse, or heedless of their duty. He strode firmly, but not heavily, over the room, but she heard him not. He stood almost immediately behind her, and still she turned not.

He stood awhile surveying her in silence. Many and changing thoughts seemed passing through his mind. His brow darkened for an instant—his hand was lifted in the same time, and seemed searching in his bosom, while a glance of savage ferocity lightened in his eye. At that moment, a deep sigh escaped from her lips, and the expression passed from his face, his hand was withdrawn from his bosom, and, placing it upon her shoulder, he pronounced her name. She turned, almost with a scream—an exclamation, which had in it as much delight as surprise—and, rising from her seat, threw herself into his arms with all the abandonment of joy.

“Oh, Edward! dear Edward! it is you—you are come—you are come at last, and I am so happy! But you have been gone so long—so very long, Edward—that I feared you had forgotten me—that you had deserted me for ever; and my heart sank within me, and I have been so miserable, that I wished myself dead a thousand times—indeed, I did; for it seemed to me far better to be dead, and cease to feel, than to have such miserable feelings as have filled my heart. But you are come now—you will now stay with me a long time, and I shall be so happy.”

While the poor heart-dependant hung upon the bosom of the outlaw, and poured forth these words in a stream that lacked emphasis as it lacked obstruction—for the sentences which she so rapidly uttered were spoken without the cessation of the smallest pauses—his looks were cold, his eye was aimless, his whole air and manner were those of a man who could no longer be moved by anything that she might say. His head was thrown back to avoid the flowing tresses of her hair which brushed his face, and his arms made a slight movement to put

her from him. This she felt — this she resisted, and clung to him with a firmer hold than before.

“Do not push me from you, Edward — not yet — not awhile — let me cling to you only a little longer. I have thought upon this dear embrace, and wept and prayed for it so long, that you must not deny it to me now. Yet I will not worry and vex you with it. I know you have grown colder and harsher than you were — that you are not so fond as you used to be when we first came to the woods. I feel that — I know it; forgive me that I press it upon you — but remember I am a woman, and believe me that I love you, O Edward, as warmly as ever, in spite of all the changes which I can not but see in you.”

“It may be so, Florence — it may be so,” replied the other coldly.

“It may be so, Edward — may be so! Can you doubt it — can you think otherwise for a single moment? Have you not seen it in all my looks — have you not felt it in all my actions — from the first to the last — from that sweet — perhaps, most unhappy hour, when I believed all your assurances of love, and gave you, oh, how entirely! all of mine — even to this, when you speak as if you believed me not, and look, as if you are indifferent whether it is truth or not which I speak? Do not force me to think this, dear Edward — do not, I implore you — unless you seek to discard me — to crush me quite — to trample me for ever in the dust! I can bear the world’s scorn — nay, I do not see — I do not feel it! I can bear anything — all things — denial, privation, banishment from friends and family — burial in these swamps — anything, but the conviction that he, for whose sake I am thus desolate — thus dependent — now makes light of the sacrifice, and takes from me, all at once, that love which I found more than a recompense for every loss. Turn not from me, Edward — speak not — look not so again upon me; for, in truth, I am very, very wretched — I know not well why, unless it is that I see so little of you. And, unless you smile upon me — unless you are willing to let me love you when you come to me — I would rather far that I were dead — I would rather far that you would kill me with a sudden blow and end all my sufferings at once. The pang of the

blow, even from your hands, given in your anger, would not be half so great a pang as that which I should suffer, without mitigation and without cure, could I feel that you were indifferent to my love."

The imploring solicitude of this speech—the tender accents—all failed to move the now cold heart of the outlaw. He suffered her hand to rest upon his arm—but his eyes turned away from the large, tear-filled orbs, that implored more eloquently for his love, than any of her accents. He had not yet attained that recklessness of spirit and of conscience which could enable him to meet without shrinking, the glance of her whom he was not unwilling to destroy.

"Florence," he replied—"either I have, or I have not to go elsewhere, and be absent from you long." If such be the necessity, you have no reason to complain of me; and, if there be no such necessity, then there is no policy in your complaint. Indeed, you will only drive me away from you by such complainings. I hate such scenes."

"Edward," returned the other, reproachfully.

He proceeded with an air of dogged determination, to push his new-formed resolution to the utmost.

"The best regards in the world may become oppressive. There is a season for love as for other things. When a man has reached the age of thirty, life has other businesses besides love. It is surprising that you have not discovered this truth before—that you should need now to be informed, that, even with the most pliable men, there are certain moods and dispositions of the mind when love is an intruder, and the embrace of the most lovely woman, an annoyance. I do not profess to be of more tender stuff than other people, and I confess to you that I hate very much to be continually excruciated!"

And this was the end of passion!—of a passion that had seemed more like frenzy than feeling—more like the outpourings of a heart convulsed by its emotions into madness, than the ebullitions of human hopes, fears, and fancies! And this was the man who had persuaded Florence Marbois to give up all—hope, honor, society—friends and family, and fly with him into the wilderness—to share with him his shame and guilt, his exposure and isolation. Verily, there is no sting

—no sorrow—greater than the wrong of the beloved one—the desertion of him in whom we had put our bosom's trust!

This was the first time that the unhappy Florence had ever been compelled to listen to language so unequivocal from the lips of her betrayer. It has been said already that, up to the present moment, a sense of pity, rather than of justice, had prevented the outlaw from showing the indifference which he felt. Hitherto, he had made an effort to exhibit a fondness which he had long since ceased to feel. A new passion for another, made him anxious to cast off a connection which had become an encumbrance; and the desire, which had almost moved him to the commission of a more brutal, if not a worse crime than that of his first wrong to the unhappy woman—if insufficient as yet to reconcile him to her murder—was quite active enough to render him unscrupulous about the open declaration of those real feelings which he had only successfully disguised, because of her unwillingness to behold and to believe them.

His tones and language now, no longer to be mistaken, were instantaneous in their effects. She started from his side—her hand shrunk from the arm which it had grasped, as if there had been danger in the contact, and she retreated for a few paces, then stood with arms drooping at her side, and her head slightly bent toward him.

Her eyes, no longer suffused, became, on a sudden, keen, arid, and burning. They shot forth an intense glare—an expression of mingled consternation and inquiry; and, when they encountered only the cold, inflexible gaze of one from whom all motives to further deception were removed—who now, perhaps, rather sought an occasion to declare the indifference which a better feeling had once made him studious to conceal—it was then that they became fixed, as it were, with a death-like distension of orb, such as betokens the first bound to madness of an oppressed brain and overpowered reason. A brief space of time elapsed, in which she preserved this posture without speaking. Her intensity of stare was painful to the outlaw, even if he no longer felt it to be reproachful; and he advanced, speaking as he did so, toward his unhappy victim.

“Come, come, Florence, I must not suffer this. These arts must no longer be practised upon me. Let us understand each

other. Let us put an end to these follies. We have both of us lived too long in the world, not to feel the wear and tear of such passions as these; and the impolicy of indulging them should be known to all who have discovered, as I have long since done, that our affections and sympathies, to be grateful and worth preserving, must not be suffered to become tyrannies. Do you understand me, Florence?"

He approached her as he spoke—he made a show of taking her hand, but she retreated, drawing her arms behind her as she did so, but preserving, at the same time, the same searching scrutiny of gaze which he had found so painfully oppressive.

"No! no! no!" she exclaimed, mutteringly, a moment after. "It can not be. It was a dream. I could have heard no such accents from his lips. It can not be that I am reserved for so dreadful a punishment. I know that I have done wrong—that I am guilty before man—guilty in the sight of Heaven—but oh! not to him! He can not have spoken thus—I will not—dare not—believe it!"

She paused, her eye still followed his, and, unwilling to endure its expression, he turned away to the window she had left.

A new resolve entered her mind—she darted rapidly toward him—caught his wrist with a nervous grasp, and spoke in clear, soft, untremulous accents—

"Edward—Edward Saxon—what was it that you said to me but now—not a minute since?—Speak!—Speak aloud—let me hear your words again, for I feel that I have not clearly understood them—I hear badly, Edward, of late, and, unless the words are spoken very distinctly, I am very apt to misunderstand them."

"Florence, why do you annoy me in this way when I come to see you? You know that I hate these wild passions—these tumults that produce no good, and are without any necessity. They trouble—they oppress me—nay, more, I confess the truth to you—they make me exceedingly reluctant to approach you."

"It is true! It is all true!—my ears did not deceive me—I heard it all—all!" she exclaimed, breathing deeply, after several protracted moments in which her bosom seemed not to heave—her lips gave forth not the slightest respiration. Her

eyes were fixed upon him with a gaze of mingled horror and surprise, and, more than once, as she gazed, her hands were passed over her brows, as if striving to put aside some obscuring tresses, which were yet not in the way. Well might she doubt her sight, when she could no longer withstand the evidence of her other senses. The now desolate and abandoned woman—abandoned by the man for whom she had long since abandoned virtue—had still a hope that there might be some smile on the lips of the speaker—some expression in his eyes, softening, subduing, qualifying, disarming the deadly accents which had reached her from his lips.

But no! In his cold, calm features, she beheld most truly the hopelessness of her heart. She saw that she was for ever banished from those affections, in which she deemed herself secure. The veil, with which pity had striven for awhile to hide from the eyes of passion the fatal truth, that love had for ever gone from the shrine where he had been worshipped, was ruthlessly torn away; and the mocking spectre alone remained, to grin over the devotee, who had for so long a season bent before its unholy and delusive features. The sin which had assumed the aspects of a power the most commanding of all others in the heart of woman, having secured its victim, beyond recall or recovery, no longer cared to preserve even its disguises, and she stood alone in the presence of the tempter, his veil uplifted, his scorn openly declared.

Florence Marbois, weak though she had been at first, and easy, like all her sex, to be overcome where she loved, and believed herself to be beloved, had yet her strength; and the strength of woman, defrauded of her hope, and despised in her affections, is no less immeasurable than fearful. The cold composure of the outlaw's glance moved her indignation, and a bitter smile of equal scorn flushed the face that a moment before had been of a deadly whiteness.

"I thank you, Edward Saxon—I thank you. Cruel as the truth is which you have at last spoken, it is some consolation that it is the truth. You have deceived me for a long time; and in this practice my own blind attachment has made the toil of artifice an easy one. But your looks tell me more than your language: and there are other truths, yet unspoken, which I

need not that you should declare. Edward Saxon, you love another!

"I know it—I feel it—else why should you now forego the deception, so long continued, and which you found so easy? Why should you teach me with such effort—so plainly—that you had ceased to love me, when it cost so little effort to persuade me that you did, and when such a faith was so grateful—so essential—to the poor heart that loved you? You are not naturally cruel, why then be guilty of so great a cruelty? why open my dreaming eyes to the loss of all for which I had lived?

"There could be but one reason—but a single motive. From the moment that you fixed your eyes upon another, the task had become irksome of continuing those shows of love to me on which I have fed so long. There was no absolute need to wear a mask any longer—you had nothing to hope, and, in the excess of your power, you, perhaps, felt assured that there was nothing which you had to fear.

"Perhaps not! Edward Saxon, you are free. You shall hear no further reproaches from Florence Marbois. Devote yourself to the hapless woman whom you have selected to fill my place. You may never discard her—she may never suffer my wrongs—and yet, if she is unlike me, perhaps she may avenge them. Enough—you are free to seek her. Though my heart withered, and my hope died, yet, I tell you, Edward Saxon, they should do so, sooner than I would implore you for the delay of a single instant ere you cast yourself into her arms; or for a single accent of reluctant love, from lips which have been so dishonored as yours."

"Florence, this is a sort of madness to which your constant jealousies have long made you liable. They have annoyed me long enough—they shall annoy me no longer—and since you so boldly declare yourself—now learn from me, that your conjecture is true. There is another—a woman, loveliest among the lovely—you shall see her—she shall even dwell with you here for a season—though I say not that she shall take your place."

"Wherefore not say it? Think not you will offend me further, Edward Saxon—think not you offend me at all. I

tell you, my heart has survived the possibility of offence at your hands. You have wronged me too deeply to offend me. I see not your scorn—I hear not your accents of coldness and cruelty—they are lost in the overwhelming conviction of the injury which you have done me. You are a bold man, Edward Saxon—a bold, brave, bad man. I am but a woman—a frail, feeble, desolate, abandoned woman—”

She paused.

“There is something more, Florence. Why do you stop? Surely the comparison demands an inference—a conclusion—a point. Shall it be a sting?”

She looked on the speaker, whose contemptuous smile showed how little he valued the feelings which he had so deeply outraged, with a grave countenance, expressing a singular degree of composure, which, but for the feelings that it really served to hide, must have been unnatural; and replied briefly—

“It may be so—bold, bad, reckless as you are, Edward Saxon—worthless as am I, and feeble—God will raise me up an avenger. I may be guilty in his sight, but it can not be that you, to whom I owe it all, should be suffered this double triumph over me. There will be an hour of retribution. There must be pangs for the betrayer as well as for the betrayed; and I will only pray that I may live long enough to know that you feel them.”

“The prayer of the wicked, you know,” was the sneering reply of the outlaw. “I could preach you a sermon from that text, Florence, were I in the mood, which would be unctuous enough for the orthodox in any congregation in Mississippi; but I spare you that, and my further presence. I must leave you for a while. I trust to find you in a better humor when I bring you a companion.”

“Now, may I have strength for my vengeance against that day!” was the exclamation of the discarded woman, as the outlaw left her; and a wild, cruel resolution rose up in her mind, as, brooding without sleep through the remainder of that weary night, she thought only and ever of the woman—who was destined to take her place in the embraces of unlawful love—as of a victim!—the last sacrifice upon that altar of passion, on which her own virtue had been the first.

CHAPTER XXXII.

EXCUSE FOR GENIUS—HAMLET DISCOVERS THAT THERE IS
EVIL IN THE WORLD—THE HEROINE AND DWARF.

“I'll no more tender him,
Than had a wolf stol'n to my teat in the night,
And robbed me of my milk.”—JOHN WEBSTER.

SAXON knew, in fact, but little of the nature of woman. Her heart was a fountain shut up, and a book sealed to him. He had the arts which could win—these, perhaps, are few and not difficult of attainment. They may be acquired by almost every youth of tolerable deportment and moderate common sense. But those finer arts which may secure the possession, and make the conquest permanent, he did not seem to possess, and, indeed, did not seem to value. Men who are rapid in their conquests, are not apt to value them. “Easy won, easy lost,” is something of a proverb, which holds no less good in the affairs of the heart than in those of the purse. Had Saxon been a more thorough examiner of that various province—the heart of a woman who loves; could he have looked deeply into its hopes and fears—its tumultuous passions, and capricious fancies—its suspicions, which grow naturally out of a just feeling of its dependence upon that arbitrary lord whom it is born to serve and must suspect—and which make it a thing all watchfulness and jealousy; he would have known that there was no object in nature so sensitive—no object so perfectly fearful—when touched rudely by reproach, or mocked by indifference and scorn. Perhaps, had he not grown too indifferent to the possession, he would have been more considerate of the claims of that affection which he once sought with avidity, and which was never more truly and devotedly his than at the very

moment when he encountered it with a contumely as reckless as it was undeserved.

He little knew the fierce and uncontrollable spirit which he roused in the bosom of Florence Marbois during the brief interview which has been just recorded. She might have forgiven the neglect which was only suspected—she might have forgotten the partial inattention of his regards, so long as he still returned, and while his lips still yielded, however unfaithfully, some vague assurances of his attachment. But when he boldly declared his defection—when the vain beauty was taught to know that there was a more highly esteemed beauty, set up as her rival;—when the devoted heart was rudely thrust from the altar, where its tendrils were still resolute to cling—when love could no longer doubt its desertion—it was then that another and a wilder nature, rose up, gloomy and terrible, within her soul.

Some glimpses of this nature had been shown the outlaw a moment ere their parting, but he had not seen them. These had been the outbreakings of a spirit which could not altogether be suppressed; but its language was beyond his comprehension. He had heard so many upbraidings from the lips of the neglected woman that his ear had grown obtuse to their true signification. He confounded the vindictive mutterings of a passion which was scorned, with the tender reproaches of a heart which was still allowed to hope. Having denied hope, having trampled upon love, having cast faith and feeling from his consideration—he should have known that Hate would be the deity most likely to be raised upon their ruins, by the spirit which he had so rudely driven from all communion with his own.

There is quite as little wisdom as virtue in injustice. Perhaps it may be affirmed, with equal truth and certainty, that it is also without cunning. The wholesomest moral prudence is truth and good faith. Good faith in all human relations. Had Saxon not been blinded by his resolution to do wrong, he must have seen, in the keen yet composed glance of the woman—in her deliberate accents—in her slow, cold, resolved manner—that a sudden and singular change had come over all her feelings in the moment when he made his open avowal of injustice.

Her temper, passionate and deep, earnest and gushing—

overflowing in its fullness, and always warm in its expression in all ordinary cases of excitement—was now, when the occasion became one, perhaps, of the greatest and most painful provocation suddenly subdued—almost frigid—an embodiment, in marble, of lofty elevation and dignified indifference. The change in character should have occasioned surprise; and reflection should have taught the outlaw, that the woman he had wronged had become an object of apprehension. But he had none. He was too glad of an occasion to shake off bonds which had become irksome, to see that, in doing so, he had incurred the resentment of a heart which could be as dangerous as it had been devoted. This sudden obtuseness of intellect may be accounted an essential part of that blindness and madness to which the gods deliver over those whom they have previously determined to destroy.

Florence Marbois watched at her window while the night faded away; yet she seemed utterly unconscious of its passing hours. She was unconscious of all things around her. Her heart was changed within her, and bitter thoughts and envenomed resolutions were growing up, and taking the place of those which, but a short time before, had been only those of tenderness and love. The cruel iron of desertion, and the sharp steel of scorn, had entered deeply into her soul, and left nothing but rankling irritation where they went. Desolation she had endured for him—but desertion by him was unendurable; and wild, vague, changing, but always hostile measures presented themselves to her mind, as she brooded, in the darkness and stillness of the night, over her wrongs, and the bitter-sweet hope which she indulged of redressing them.

“There are means,” she murmured at intervals, “there must be means everywhere provided to humble the oppressor—to revenge the injured. I am weak—I am woman—but God has not left me utterly helpless, if he has made me destitute. I know that I can have my revenge—I know that I can strike—that I can triumph;—and here—here in the darkness of this hour, and in the presence of such spirits of evil or of good—I care not which—as travel the eternal realms of space, I swear that, sleeping or waking, my prayer, my dream, my desire—my only study, as it is my only hope—shall be in what way

to revenge my wrong—to bring this proud, insolent man to the dust—to deprive him of those joys of which he has for ever deprived me !”

By what means she hoped to effect her object, may not even be conjectured in this early stage of her resolution ; but no one could have hearkened to the tone of her accents, or beheld the fixed expression of decision in her eyes, and reject the conviction that she was as solemnly sworn to her revenge, as if the demons of the air whom she invoked as witnesses, had received and registered the oath. They did so ; and it may be that, ministers of justice, no less than of evil, they wrought in behalf of the deserted leman of the outlaw, when the ordinary powers of society would have failed, and the laws would still have been, as they had ever been before, objects of scorn and mockery to the reckless spirit who had so long held them in defiance. But let us not anticipate.

In leaving her that night, Saxon also left the encampment to which had been given the ambitious title of Cane Castle. Another brief conference with his coadjutor, Jones—that dexterous agent, who had so successfully entrapped and deceived the unwary actor—by which he was provided with final instructions for the future disposition of that unconscious worthy ; and then the outlaw sped off to those other performances, which have been already narrated, and which ended in the arrest of Harry Vernon.

The next day rose upon Horsey, still as Hamlet. The grave habit of the prince of Denmark was that which, in all his wardrobe, came nearest to the guise of a simple citizen ; and half reconciled to the costume in character, from a pleasant conviction which the flatteries of Jones encouraged, that he looked a marvellous proper man in it, the worthy actor renewed the search after his ordinary garments with something more of equanimity than he had shown on the preceding night. Still, he did not hesitate to speak of the robbery in proper terms.

“The mere loss of the clothes is nothing, Jones,” said he “but that we have thieves in the company is most shocking. There must be a stir about it—the rogue must be found out, and we must purge ourselves of the connection as soon as possi-

ble. Our profession is one quite too noble for any such communion."

Jones fully agreed with him that it was shocking indeed; but suggested the difficulty of finding out the thief, and the awkwardness of any direct inquiries. It was agreed upon, that their conduct was to be governed by circumstances; and, meanwhile, a sharp look-out was to be maintained upon the movements of all suspicious persons;—Jones confessing that there were some two or three of the *company* whom he really believed to be no better than they should be.

"Now, that bull-headed fellow, Bull, I take to be one of these suspicious persons," said the actor, remembering the annoyances of the previous night; "a fellow that gets drunk and makes a beast of himself, will be very apt to steal. Don't you think so, Jones?"

"I do," replied the other, very courteously. "As a general rule, Mr. Horsey, a drunkard is bad enough to be a thief; but there are exceptions to all general rules, and Bull is one of them. He's a genius, Mr. Horsey, as I said before—an immense genius. You may see nothing of it for some days; but he'll break out at last, and overwhelm you. He's the very impersonation of fun, farce, and frolic."

"But the heroine, Jones—sha'n't I have a talk with her to-day? It's strange that all your first-rates should be so eccentric."

"Natural enough—they all know their value. You would not think it strange, when you know them as I do, and know the extent of their popularity."

"And what do you call her—what's her name?"

"Her name?—oh, yes—her name's Clifford—Mrs. Clifford—Mrs. Ellen Clifford—she's married, you know I told you, and—another reason why you should be cautious in approaching her, and why she should be devilish shy of all third persons—her husband's worse than a Turk for jealousy. He flares up, like a rocket, on the smallest occasions. Nay, it is said he gave a poor fellow three inches of his bowie-knife in Natchy, for praising her beauty off the stage. You see she's very beautiful."

"What a d——d fool. Egad, I'd like no better fun than just

to plague such a fellow; and if you had no other reason than his jealousy to keep me from looking her up, I'd be at her in twenty minutes. Can't you get me a chance to talk with her. I'd like to see what sort of stuff she's made of."

"Time enough to-morrow. Let us go now and see after the boys. We have a boat here on the bayou—a little dug-out—and, if you say so, we'll take our fishing tackle, and get some fish. Fishing here is our most profitable idleness, as, indeed, it is everywhere else; and, if you like it half so much as I do, you will not think much of the manager's absence."

"But my Hamlet!" exclaimed the actor, looking at the costly garment. "Such a dress as this, Jones, won't do for every day. The d——d strange-looking green and yellow mud of this river—the water, if I'm splashed—will play the very d—l with my Hamlet."

"Won't splash you," said Jones, hurrying along. "I'm like a bird in a boat—can't be said to dip a wing, even when I take my fish. I handle a dugout, Mr. Horsey—not to compare low things to high—with almost as much grace as you do the foils in Hamlet. But come on—fear nothing, and if we get no fish, why, you can give us the grave scene, which shall make our time pass with less gravity."

The last suggestion was the finishing stroke, and Horsey followed without further opposition, though not without sundry misgivings that his sables might suffer some hurts much too serious for any smoothing or stitching, even from hands so white and dextrous as those of Mary Clayton. Many a compunctious glance did he give to his inexpressibles as he went forward, following his cunning confederate through bog, bush, and brier, until they reached the muddy mouth of the narrow creek where lay the egg-like skiff which was to bear the twain to the main trunk of the Chitta-Loosa.

Here they embarked in the trembling fabric, the heart of Horsey rising to his throat, with every roll and reel of the frail vessel; while his eyes, drawn by a natural attraction to the banks, surveyed, with momentarily increasing disquiet, the yellowish slime upon their surface; the soft miry ooze of which seemed for all the world as if it were intended to receive with close embrace and a most yielding compliance, the pressure of any

derelict body, the waif or tribute of the slow and turbid river which had left it where it lay.

But that which disturbed the composure of the actor had no effect upon his companion. His muscular arms sent the little dug-out through the narrow passage with a dexterity no less prompt than fearless, and Horsey had not drawn a second breath before the boat quivered upon its centre, and hung suspended for a moment in its course, as, leaving the sluggish canal through which it had emerged, it felt the downward rush of the main current, in its restless passage to the Mississippi.

Florence Marbois, as soon as she discovered that Jones had left the island—a knowledge obtained without difficulty by one who was so well served as the lady in question—immediately went forth from her little habitation to a spot, the path to which seemed familiar, where she found the dwarf Stillyards busy mending his nets. He stood up as he beheld her, with an air of deference in his manner which he was not wont to show to all other persons.

“Richard,” she said, “I have need of you again: are you ready?”

“Soon will be, ma’am—have nothing to do but tie a few threads, and lay a draw-cord through the end-loops of the net. This hole here would let a dozen jacks through; and there’s not a suckfish in Big Black that wouldn’t laugh at this for gill-tackle.”

“Richard,” continued the lady, in tones at once of command and entreaty, “put by your net for the present, I would speak with you.”

The foot of the dwarf turned the net over a low bush; his hands would have done it more effectually, but his vanity was unwilling that he should stoop, in the sight of a lady, to a performance in which his physical deformities became only the more conspicuous. His manner the while was that of the most respectful deference. He declared himself ready at that instant to obey her commands, and made some rude assurances of his great willingness at all times to do her service.

“I know it, Richard—I know that you have always served me faithfully—and believe that you will continue to do so in this, probably the last task which I shall ever give you again.”

“Ma’am! Heh—what?”

She did not seem to heed the interruption or the exclamation, but proceeded:—

“You have kept my secrets, Richard, and always made, I have good reason to believe, a faithful report of what you saw. Here is some money for you. It is more than I promised you, but not more than you deserve, and not near so much as you shall have when you have done for me another service, and, as I said, most probably the last.”

“The last, ma’am?”

“Yes, Richard, my fears will soon be at an end,” replied the lady; “she should surely cease to fear who has at length ceased to hope.”

The dwarf looked up, wondering more at the looks and accents of the speaker, than at the words she uttered. She continued:—

“Did you know that Saxon was here last night?”

He nodded assent.

“He went before daylight,” continued the lady. “He went from me for ever. We are no longer one—we are parted—parted for ever.”

The dwarf grinned, but not with any pleasure. The expression of his face was that of good-natured incredulity.

“You smile—you believe me not, Richard.”

“Ah, Ma’am Florence, how can I believe you? you know how often you’ve said the same thing—every time you’ve sent me to look after him.”

A faint smile passed over the lady’s lips as she listened.

“You are only right to doubt, Richard. I have, indeed, too often *spoken* only, when I should have performed. I will not seek now, by any new assurances, to make you believe my present resolution. Whether you believe or not—whether *he* believes—is of little importance to either of us now. But there’s some difference of circumstances, Richard, of which you may have no knowledge. Hitherto, I may have done him wrong by my suspicions—now I can do him none. Last night he told me that he loved another.”

“He!”

“Ay, he! Edward Saxon, for whom I gave up all—friends,

family, good life, good name—hope, truth, and innocence! He has forgotten the sacrifice, which, indeed, I too had forgotten so long as he loved me. But that is over, and I am now lost to him as I have been so long lost to all. I have nothing now left me but to die.”

“Nothing, Ma’am Florence, nothing! Sure—”

“Ay, there is something, Richard—there is something more. It is a woman’s feeling Richard, to desire some knowledge of her rival—to desire to see her, to know if she is beautiful, to hear her speak, and hearken if her accents be sweet; and, perhaps—but I need not say more of this to you, Richard.”

“Oh, yes, Ma’am Florence—I beg you do.”

“No, no!” was the rather stern reply. “It needs not. It was only of another feeling—they call it a woman’s feeling too—that I would have spoken—that I would gratify. But here it shall remain—secret from you—secret from all—doubly sweet to myself that it is so secret!—untill the blessed day which shall enable me to realize my last hope—the hope of—”

The word was unspoken, but the vindictive gleaming of the the eye, and the convulsive quiver of her lips while she shut them together, as if to prevent utterance, were sufficiently conclusive that “revenge” was the only word which could have properly finished the sentence. Her heart heaved with the suppressed secret—her hand was clenched, and for a moment she stood gazing on the dwarf with an expression of face which almost startled him with a feeling of personal apprehension.

“Richard, you must follow Saxon—once more you must follow him. Find out where he goes—whom he seeks. Look not on her—so that you may not be won by her beauty also to betray the poor Florence—then come to me—come back and get your reward. You shall have money and jewels—all the jewels and money that I have, Richard—they will almost make you rich; but you must be sure to tell me where he hides her, when he brings her here—and how soon I may look upon the woman whose feet have trodden upon my heart. Go! let me hear your horse’s tread immediately. Away, Richard! Sleep not as you go—God be with me and strengthen me, for well I know I shall never sleep till you return—even if I sleep then. Away!”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE APE CHAFES THE TIGER — A SNARE AND A SURPRISE.

"I do pronounce him in that very shape
He shall appear in proof."—*Henry VIII.*

THE dwarf listened to the commands of his mistress, and prepared to obey them. He had been accustomed to do so; indeed, it may as well be stated in this place that Richard Stillyards, as he was called, was rather an attendant of Florence Marbois, than of the outlaw by whom she was betrayed. What were the particular circumstances by which he became bound to her service, may not here be known; but it has been seen that there were events and performances by which she had deserved his gratitude; and his devotion to her service showed that he was not unwilling to give it. He had been faithful to her for a long period; obeying her slightest and her strangest behest; ministering, perhaps harmfully at times, to her jealousies of the outlaw, though without seeking to encourage them; for Stillyards, so far, had been able to discover no single instance of a departure from his pledged faith to his leman on the part of Edward Saxon; and he now regarded the bitter rather than the angry mood of his mistress, by which she declared her renewed suspicions, as being equally without foundation with all which she had entertained before.

But though he assured her of this conviction, his assurances were made in vain; and he was sagacious enough to perceive that her present disquiet was of a character which she had not before exhibited. Hitherto, she had shown a vague jealousy — a general but uncertain suspicion — of the truth of one upon whom she felt she had none of those holds, which can alone be

found in a compliance with the established laws of virtue and society. There was hostility now, and hate, mingled with her suspicions; and the very calmness which overspread her features, and which regulated and made deliberate the tremulous accents of her voice as she spoke, convinced him that, whether she had or had not occasion for her anger, it was yet of a kind to prove dangerous.

Stillyards was not so bound to Florence Marbois, as to lend himself to all her purposes; as to become the mere tool and agent of a rash and improvident vengeance; and while he prepared, without scruple, to set forth in obedience to her commands, he half-resolved that Saxon should have warning that his mistress was no longer to be trifled with. Still, with a partial curiosity, he resolved first to discover, if he could, whether the outlaw was really unfaithful to his vows—an assertion made with so much solemnity now, by the deserted woman, as to impress itself upon his mind with some force, in spite of his constant conviction heretofore, that she had but little reason for complaint. His purpose was to counsel the outlaw, if such were the case, to greater prudence in his declarations and proceedings; and, tickling his own vanity with the patronizing idea of being an adviser to the master beagle of the band, he saw but little harm in practising a like unfaithfulness with his master toward the mistress whom he served.

These resolutions passed through his mind as he proceeded upon his mission. He soon got upon the track of the outlaw, and followed him to Lucchesa, where he arrived in time to become privy to the position of Vernon in the house of Mr. Wilson, and that of Saxon in reference to his daughter. He was soon convinced that the story of Florence was not without foundation. For the first time, he beheld the reckless outlaw in the character of a devoted, if not a sighing lover. He saw that the affair was rapidly advancing to a close, and on the afternoon of the day when Vernon was hurried from his mistress by the self-created officers of justice, he availed himself of an opportunity to emerge from his cover and present himself boldly before the outlaw.

The place chosen for this revelation, was a thick copse in the very wood in which the final scene had taken place between

Vernon and the maiden. To this copse Saxon had retired after he had witnessed the successful termination of one portion of his projects. Stillyards had been equally fortunate in beholding the events which we have already described, and he was, therefore, very well able to speak home upon the subject. While Saxon, seated upon a fallen poplar, was busy chewing the cud of various thought—thought no less perplexing in some respects than it was exulting in others; and while his eyes, fixed upon the ground, saw no image but that drawn by his amorous fancy upon the warm glass of his affections, he was suddenly and unpleasantly startled into a new sphere of existence by the abrupt appearance of the dwarf at his side.

“How now, sirrah!—What make you here?” he demanded in harshest accents, as he beheld the intruder. With a grin of equal consequence and humility the dwarf replied:—

“She sent me—she’s heard it, sir—heard it all—knows all about it, sir, and it’s only right, sir, you should know it won’t do to vex her; she’s angry as a tiger-cat—looks as if she could bite and do a great deal of mischief; and though she don’t say, yet I can see, and I thought it only right to let you know, and to warn you, sir—there’s danger—danger in her eye—”

“What the devil do you mean, fool?” demanded the outlaw, with an impatience momentarily increasing, as he beheld the airs of self-esteem which now distinguished the manner of the speaker.

“Fool!” cried the other, with a vexatious diminution of his importance; “fool! Not so great a fool neither, if you knew all.”

“All!—what all? What is it that your sagacious head carries, that it is fitting I should know? Speak out, booby, and leave off your damnable faces.”

This startling, and most humiliating reception, effectually turned the sweet milk of the dwarf’s disposition, and a burning sentiment of indignation in his bosom, made him wish he had left things to themselves, confined himself to the old system of espionage, and suffered the revengeful mood of his mistress to work its own way, without offering any obstructions to its progress. It was necessary, however, that he should now

speak, and to some purpose, in order to account for that obtrusion of his ungainly person, upon the secrecy of one who seemed in such excellent temper to resent it. It may readily be conjectured that what he did say, in the momentary confusion of his thoughts from such a reception, was scarcely satisfactory.

"You don't know, perhaps, sir, that she sent me."

"Pshaw! you are a spy upon my actions—you have long been so, booby. Do you think me ignorant of that? Her folly and your stupidity have taught me this long ago; and, but that you could do me no harm, and that I care as little for your cunning as for her jealousy, I had stretched you out straighter with a bullet than you have ever been able to stretch yourself. Begone, fool—she is no less a fool that sends you. Cross my path—lurk about my footsteps—let me but catch a glance of your monkey visage again where it should not be, and I silence you for ever. Begone!—But—remember!"

With these words the outlaw rose, and seizing the dwarf by the ears, sunk his finger-nail into the flesh until the blood oozed out from the wound, then flung him from him with a force that needed not the additional impetus given by his foot, which was yet applied with no qualified energy.

The violence of the effort flung the deformed upon the ground, from which he sprang to his feet with the agility of a tiger. He turned upon his assailant—his eyes glared with the vindictive and unreflecting rage of the same animal—and his unarmed fingers were extended, as if endued with an instinct of their own, to grapple with the foe.

But the eye of the outlaw quelled the inferior, and a pistol which he drew from his bosom, effectually counselled him to increase the distance between them. Slowly he sank from sight into the neighboring woods, from which, however, he did not then depart. The watch which he had hitherto kept over the movements of the outlaw, on account of his mistress, was now maintained on his own account. The malice which is the fruit of outraged self-esteem, is that which is the last to forgive its victim; and when Stillyards crept into the woods, it was with the stealthy mood of the wild beast to which we have already likened him—the appetite which never knows repose

until it gorges the full feast from the very lifeblood of its prey.

Saxon had some lurking doubts that he had provoked an evil spirit into activity, and though his apprehensions were kept down by that scorn of the feeble and deformed which the strong and proud are very apt to feel, yet a momentary conviction of the necessity of curbing or crushing such a spirit in the beginning, persuaded him, the moment that Stillyards had disappeared from sight, to pursue him.

This he did, but without effect. His search was fruitless. A creature so active as the dwarf, who could crouch with so little effort, and conceal himself in places into which other men could not penetrate, could not well be discovered, unless with his own consent; and hopeless of a search which was no less tiresome than fruitless, he left his unprofitable quest in the prosecution of others far more attractive.

That evening, Saxon, who had sundry agents at work, succeeded in getting Mr. Wilson to the hotel, and safely seating him, with three others, at a game of whist. Without knowing the history of this unfortunate gentleman, which would have given the outlaw a very desirable power over him, the latter had yet been able to discover that leading passion of the other, which had led him from folly to excess, and from excess, by a very common transition, to crime. He saw, in the eager anxiety of the stranger when engaged at cards, in his flushed cheek, fitful eye, and tremulous impatience, the peculiar material out of which the devoted gamester is made. That passion for small risks—that pleasure in a hope of gain that rises up into a feverish sentiment in spite of every defeat, and goes on renewing itself day after day, till the very dregs of moral life are reached, and the carcass becomes a thing of spasmodic and convulsive action, without stability or strength—was there, preying upon and predominant in the soul of Wilson, and renewing those bonds of slavishness and sin, under the coercive trammels of which he had sunk, first into the debtor, and next into the felon—from deep to deep—until but one more gulf—the closing covering gulf of all remained—yielding him refuge and utter ruin at the same moment in its unrelaxing jaws.

It was not long before Wilson surrendered himself up to the

game; and when his tens, twenties, and hundreds lay, upon the board, and when his hands touched the cards with a tremulousness that betrayed all the reviving passions of his feeble nature, leaving him no thought of other objects or relations, Saxon stole away from the company, unseen by any but the lynx-eyed dwarf, who, himself unobserved, was now a far more devoted spy upon the actions of his master than he had ever shown himself before. His own bitter hostility was now his prompter in addition to the jealousy of his mistress; and, he half forgot, in pursuing his own malice, that he had pledged himself to any other service. He followed the outlaw from the threshold, and was the master of all his movements.

But a brief space had elapsed after the departure of Saxon, when a billet was put into the hands of Virginia Wilson. She was sitting, sad and sleepless, keeping a watch doubly lonesome and apprehensive in the absence of her father, to whose errors she could not be altogether blind, in the stillness and silence of her chamber. The younger sister already slept in the couch beside which she sat, and her own loneliness grew more oppressive to her heart as she listened to the sweet, equal respiration from her lips—the breathing of that undisturbed sleep of innocence and youth, ere care has deemed it worthy of a blow, or defeated hope, and anxious affection, brought restlessness and wakefulness to its hours of repose.

How she envied the child that sleep. How she wished she could forget—that she could close her mind as easily as she could close her eyes, to the apprehensions which beset her soul in reference to the fortunes of him, who already occupied so large a place in its interests and being. The billet which was brought her, came from *him*. That assurance aroused her. She seized it with trembling hands and breathless anxiety. She carried it to the light and read:—

“I am free, dearest Virginia—but a fugitive. I dare not show myself at your dwelling. I dare not, at this moment, show myself to any but to you. Will you come to me—though for an instant only. Come to me, if you love me—if you have faith in my love—if you believe in my innocence—if you would make me happy at a time when I am most miserable—

meet me by the fallen pine—under those old groves—in the dear sweet walks which have been already consecrated to our hearts by moments which were too blissful to have been so brief. I wait for you, dearest Virginia—my heart trembles with impatient hope.

“VERNON.”

Vernon would not have written such a letter; but Virginia Wilson was no critic. Her own feelings were too quick, too active, too excited, to suffer her judgment to examine the epistle calmly. Her heart beat with new emotions. What could be his present danger? Why should he be a fugitive? Was he, in truth, a murderer—could he have slain his friend by accident? She had his own assurances that he had not done so, and she believed them. But there was still a mystery, and doubts, to the heart that loves, are agonies.

There was but one mode to escape them; and though not insensible to the awkwardness of a situation which in ordinary cases would seem to be an impropriety, she determined on giving him the meeting which he craved. Leaving or entering her chamber, she had been accustomed to kiss her sister.

The custom was a sweet one. They had been almost the all in all, and the only, to each other. Nevertheless, there were circumstances and causes, which, in spite of the real tenderness of the father, made Virginia not unfrequently feel that they were almost fatherless also; and now, when bending over the sleeping girl, and pressing her lips gently upon her cheek, the tears, few but big, fell from her eyes, and trembled upon the forehead of the sleeper, like dew-drops, in a summer moonlight, beading the soft crimson of the half-opening flower.

But tears, though not unseemly on the cheeks of so fair a blossom, yet appeared to the mind of Virginia as of evil omen. She kissed them off with the haste of a maternal anxiety, and hurried from the chamber. There was none to obstruct her departure, for the indulgence of her father had left her the complete mistress of his household. She hurried by the garden pale, the forest groves were soon reached—the well known shadows of old trees surrounded her, and now the fallen pine tree appears, and she stands in the presence of—Edward Saxon!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BEAGLE CARRIES OFF THE DOVE—HAMLET TIRES OF
YORICK—FLIGHT—THE SMILE AND DAGGER.

“The innocency lost,
The bating of affection soon will follow.”—BEN JONSON.

THOUGH the shadows were thick around her, and the evening light of the moon imperfect, the keen eyes of love soon discovered the difference between the man she met and him whom she expected. She recoiled with a natural emotion of surprise, but did not feel any suspicions that the appearance of Saxon in that spot was the result of any sinister design. He might be the trusted friend of Vernon on this occasion, as he had always appeared hitherto—but where was Vernon. She looked round anxiously, but without a single doubt of his near neighborhood, until the outlaw approached and addressed her:—

“You look for Mr. Vernon, Miss Wilson—but I come from him. He has told me all—I am his friend—he has sent me to bring you to him.”

“But where is he, sir? He should have met me here—here—it was so written in the note.”

“Did not the note also tell you, Miss Wilson, that he is a fugitive? He has need, let me assure you, of every precaution. He is in danger—he dare not show himself.”

“You alarm me, sir. What may this mean—what is his danger?”

“He has escaped from the officers—they are even now in pursuit of him!”

“Escaped!—Can it be? But why should he escape, if innocent?—Why? But he is here!—Here! At hand—within hearing. You are his friend—and I!—What can he fear from me?—Why should he not come forward? My voice shall re-

assure him—when he hears me, he will know that there is no danger here. Vernon! Vernon!”

Twice she called aloud, and waited for the answering sounds that she desired. But her summons was made in vain. A faint echo of her own accents alone reached her ears. The outlaw stood patiently and smiled, but did not speak until her eyes were turned inquiringly upon him again.

“He does not hear you, Miss Wilson—he can not hear you at this distance; yet it is not far where he hides. I can guide you to the spot in a few minutes.”

“And why should he not come here, Mr. Saxon? Who, beside ourselves, know that he is near us?—But, perhaps, you can tell me more, but you will not. He has been pursued—he is hurt—wounded in escaping!—Speak, sir—speak—fear not my strength—I can listen—I can bear it all.”

“You have guessed rightly, Miss Wilson, though I feared to tell you,” replied the outlaw, promptly availing himself of the suggestion which her fears had made; “he is hurt, but not seriously—he awaits you at a little distance, and I am ready to guide you to him.”

There was a moment’s hesitation about the maiden; not that she doubted as to what should be her duty—not that she had any doubt of the truth of Saxon’s narrative; but the requisition had been so sudden, the event so unexpected, which required her presence, that her sense of propriety had been startled—her thoughts were all in confusion. The wily outlaw conjectured the true state of her feelings.

“Am I to think you indifferent to his fate, Miss Wilson? His hurts require—”

“Indifferent! Oh, no! no! no!—but these woods look so wild—and you, Mr. Saxon, are a stranger.”

“But if *he* confides, Miss Wilson.”

“It should be—it is enough for me. I will confide also. I will go with you. Lead me to him, Mr. Saxon, I have no scruples now.”

He took her arm within his own, and led her along a little Indian foot-trail, which carried them over the hill, and still deeper into the shadows of the forest. The heart of Virginia Wilson beat with momentarily rising, but unexpressed emotions,

as the way became more intricate, and as she perceived that every step carried her still farther from the cottage. Still she went on, anxiously expecting to hear the sounds of that voice which alone could reassure her. But the woods were silent, and the only murmur which reached her ears, was that of a melancholy pilgrim, the wind, pursuing his sleepless way among the branches. At length they emerged into a little opening, and Saxon paused, as if to listen.

"Is he not here, Mr. Saxon? We are far from the cottage."

"Not here—a few steps farther;" and he would have advanced, as he spoke, to a dark and dense grove in front of them, but the maiden hung back. There was something in the reserve of Saxon—something in his manner—which made her reluctant to commit herself longer to his charge, and inclined her to regret that she had already trusted him. Besides, the reflection was so natural to a mind conscious of its own good faith, why had he deceived her, when she had declared her willingness to go with him? They had now been walking full fifteen minutes, yet saw no signs of the person who had been described as immediately at hand.

"I will go no farther, sir—I dare not. If Mr. Vernon be not within hearing now, I can advance no farther. I am afraid I have already erred in leaving home."

"It is too late now to think of this, Virginia, too late to retreat," exclaimed the outlaw, throwing off his disguises, and grasping her wrist firmly as he spoke—"you must go with me."

"Ha, sir!—will you dare?"

"Ay, much, everything, where I love, where there is a prize to be won so lovely as yourself. You must go with me—you must be mine, Virginia."

As he spoke, his arms encircled her waist, and she felt herself lifted from the ground.

"Monster—villain—release me!" screamed the maiden, with a voice of equal indignation and terror—"Vernon! Vernon! come to me! Save me!"

"You scream in vain, Virginia. I have deceived you. Vernon is not near—not within hearing—the billet which brought you to my arms was a forged one. But be not angry. You have found a lover who will be no less true—no less devoted

than himself—one who is no less willing, and far more able to serve you with his love. The life of Vernon is forfeit to the laws.”

“God help me! God help him! Villain! I believe you not. He will soon be here. He will follow—he will save me. Beware of his anger and his vengeance!”

“Ah! Virginia, if you but knew how little I regard these threatenings, and of how little value they really are, you would surely forbear them. Why should you thus afflict yourself and me. I suffer only as I see you give yourself fatigue and pain. Your screams are idle. In these pathless forests, there is none to hear you, unless it be the wild cat, who, if the humor suits, will give you scream for scream.”

“Yes, villain—there are others nigh to save me. Men are nigh. I hear the tread of a horse—I hear the voices of men. They come—they come! It is Vernon—it is my father. They come to save me. They will avenge this insult. Set me down, and fly! Do this! Release me on the instant, and I will tell them nothing of the outrage.”

The outlaw laughed aloud as he listened to this language.

“The men you hear are those whom I have commanded here to assist me. The horses they bring will help to bear us away together. They will carry us, sweet Virginia, to a place of retreat which neither father nor lover can find out. Do you hear that sound?—it is that of the beagle; when I have answered it in like manner, they will be here. Hark!”

And, as he finished, the outlaw replied to the signal in a clear, ringing note, which rose triumphant even above the piercing shriek of despair and terror with which she accompanied it. In a few moments after, the agents of the outlaw, guided by his answer, approached the spot where the maiden, still struggling and shrieking, was held by the firm grasp of the ravisher. His assistants were three in number. One was mounted—the other two on foot.

“Where is the jersey?” demanded the outlaw.

“On the edge of the wood—we couldn’t get it through the brush,” was the answer.

“Enough—lead the way.”

“Shall I help you, captain?”

"No, no! Clear the way only!" replied the powerful ruffian, lifting the maiden, while he spoke, as if she were a child, and bearing her forward, indifferent alike to screams and struggles, threats and entreaties, until he reached the spot where the vehicle had been left. Into this she was placed, with all tenderness, but no little difficulty, and leaping in beside her, Saxon secured her within his arms, while one of his emissaries, occupying the front seat, assumed the office of Jehu on the occasion, and drove off with as reckless and rapid a speed as ever did that renowned whip of ancient days.

Their course was for Cane Castle, in the swamp of Chittaloosa. They drove round Lucchesa, avoiding the thoroughfare with some caution at the first. After a little while they turned into it, and before midnight the carriage came to a halt with the thickening ooze of the swamp plashing clammily about its wheels. Before this time, exhaustion had come to the relief of the unhappy maiden, and when she was lifted from the vehicle she was in a state of utter unconsciousness and stupor. Jones, the wary coadjutor of the outlaw, was at hand ready to receive him.

"Well, Jones, we are here in safety, and all is as we could wish it. What of Florence? We must have her help here."

"Can you think of it, sir?" demanded the other, with some astonishment. "Can you hope for such a thing from her?"

"Ay, this or anything, as I please, my good fellow. I command her—she is mine—my slave, as thoroughly bound to my service as if the bond were written with her blood. Her love for me—the very passion which works her jealousy to madness—is my best security for her devotion and her service. Think nothing of her grumbling, Jones—I have heard it too often to hearken to it now. A kind word—a soothing entreaty—and all's over. She will forgive the rival, when she can share the conquest."

"I hardly think it, sir, with Florence. There's something I don't like in her eyes, and the way she speaks. She's changed very much these three days."

"Jones, you're a fool. You know nothing of women, my good fellow, or you'd not give yourself such troublesome notions; certainly you would not afflict me with them. Florence

is not different from all the rest. She will have her own way if she can, and when she finds that impossible, she will content herself with all that you are willing to allow her."

"But the two in the same house!" said Jones, in a tone of further expostulation.

"And with one man between 'em!" continued the outlaw, with a laugh. "But let this not trouble you, Jones. They shall be kept apart. There's the squatter's cabin by the Little Bend—to that I will carry Virginia. Florence shall see her there—she will need some assistance."

"Better keep them entirely apart. If the young lady needs help—female help—there's Brown Bess, you know."

"What, is she here—and Yarbers? How's this?"

"Your orders, I hear. There's a warrant out against John Yarbers from old Badger. Ned Mabry's sworn against him about that horse business."

"True, true—I had forgotten that. Bess is the very person to be with her. Let us have help now, Jones, so that we may carry her safely through the swamp. The river's rising—is it not?"

"Considerably—there must have been a heavy fall of rain among the 'alls above."

"And when did Yarbers arrive?"

"It's been four days now, and better. He got in on Monday."

"Not pursued?"

"Not that he told me."

"Cane Castle must look a little livelier than ever;—and how does your Shakspearean reconcile himself to his bondage? What of the actor-fellow—have you been able to keep up the ball?"

There was some hesitation in the reply of Jones, and his accents were those of a man conscious, perhaps of some fault of commission or neglect.

"I'm sorry to say, sir—he's off."

"Off! How off! You don't mean to say escaped, heh?"

"Fact, sir—and how, there's no saying at present. I had him well watched, as I thought."

The tidings had the effect of making the outlaw instantly grave. His accents became stern.

"This is a bad business, Jones. Can there be traitors among us? Another Hurdis affair! This must be seen to, man. We are not secure an instant if we can not see our prisoner. But you pursued—you have beagles on the track? What have you done? how was it? Speak! By heavens, you are a duller fellow than I counted you."

"I can really say nothing, sir, as to the manner of the escape. The chap was safe enough so late as this morning."

"The d—l, and so he got off in broad daylight?"

Jones gave a mortified assent, and was compelled to submit in silence to the severe upbraidings of his principal, whose reproaches did not lack sarcasm to heighten their severity.

"By heavens, Jones, but I thought you more of a man than this speaks for. With five active fellows in the swamp—all at your summons—with nothing to do but this—you suffer yourself to sleep in your watch, and neglect everything. Did the fellow go off on foot?"

Here Jones was compelled to make another confession, which completed the story of his inefficient watch. Horsey had contrived to resume possession of old Bowline—his worthy father's venerable "Dot-and-go-one."

"Worse and worse!" exclaimed the other. "There's treachery somewhere. We must sift the matter closely. Yarbers, you say, is here—his wife and daughter. Ha! Jones—that woman—that wife of his—Brown Bess is at the bottom of it all. She is shameless enough to be more honest than her husband, and will no doubt think it a moral duty to hang us all if she can, and him, for distinction sake, at the head of the string. Well—we must use her now. Away, and let Yarbers bring her to Little Bend at once. I will meet you at Cane Castle in half an hour. Say nothing to Florence of my arrival—nay, do you avoid seeing her. I will tell her all myself. Away!"

But Florence had not been left uninformed on any of these subjects. She had, as we have seen, her own emissaries at work, and the dwarf had not only beheld the transfer of the captive maiden from the wagon to the squatter's house at Little Bend, but he had listened to every word of the dialogue between the outlaw and his agent, which had accompanied and followed her removal, and which we have endeavored, in the

preceding passages, to abridge to our limits. He delivered his information to his jealous mistress some time before Saxon made his appearance.

"She's here," said he to Florence, as he stood suddenly before her where she sat in the gloom and silence of that lonely chamber, looking out upon the solemn swamp. It was in the same chamber that we found her first, when far other thoughts filled her mind, and far other feelings dwelt in her bosom, than those which rule over them now—making the one wild and the other wretched. She started as she heard his accents—she rose from her chair and approached him.

"You do not say it, Richard!" she said, with a solemn tremulousness of accent. "You do not tell me that she is indeed here—that he has dared!"

The dwarf nodded his head ere he spoke, then answered her:—

"At the squatter's old cabin, by the Little Bend."

"So near!" was the exclamation of the unhappy Florence, as she walked to the window and looked out—though, through the dense woods, her eyes could distinguish nothing—in the direction of the designated hovel. She turned again, after lingering a moment, and approached the emissary.

"Richard—you have served me faithfully, and one of the last acts of my life shall be to reward you. But tell me—have you seen her? Is she so very beautiful?"

"Very beautiful, they say—though I don't care much to see beautiful people, and didn't look much at her."

"But you saw her?"

"Couldn't help it—saw her a'most every day since I left you. I always followed *him*, and he went to her every day, and they walked out sometimes in the woods."

"Ha! ha! They walked out in the woods, did they? and she is very fond of him, I suppose? They are well matched—very well matched—a loving couple, Richard? Did you not think them so? But, do not answer me now. Go, Richard—leave me now—I would rather be alone."

"Look you, ma'am—there's one thing," said the dwarf, lingering, "if you think this strange gal's fond of Saxon, you're altogether out. Sho ain't fond of him, no how. She don't like

him. He put her in the jarsey by main force, and she screamed and made a mighty fuss."

"Ha! Is this true?" demanded Florence, with considerable interest.

"P'int-blank truth. I saw her fighting him, and you might hear her screech for more than a mile—that you might—before she fainted."

"What!—she fainted?"

"Died off, like 'twas all over with her, and didn't move agin, till they lifted her to carry her to the squatter's house."

"Richard, are you sure of this? Speak nothing but the truth—you know not how much depends on this!" said Florence, with solemnity.

"I'll take bible-oath to it, ma'am! I'll kiss the book to it. There's no mistake in me this time, I tell you."

"Enough!" she said, waving him, with her hand, to depart. "Enough! I thank you, Richard—I will reward you in the morning. Leave me now."

When he had gone, she returned to the window.

"This makes a difference," she said, musingly—"a great difference. If true, she is already a wretched victim, and no blow of mine would do her harm. Yet, even if she be a willing creature of his lust—if he find in her, what he found in me—a weak heart, a yielding nature, a confiding faith—that loved blindly and weakly, and was lost, before it became conscious that there was anything to lose—still, why should she be the victim even then? She knows not that she wrongs another—she *does* not—but he—he who knows all—who wilfully wrongs, and scornfully defies, he—but he is here—it is he who should feel the blow. It is his heart, and his only, which my hand should strike. And it shall strike! I am sworn to this! Lost!—an outcast from all hope, all life, all love—I am not so base, so worthless, or so weak, that I can not strike for vengeance! No! Edward Saxon, you have dared to scorn the heart which you once implored—to insult that womanly pride which you once solicited!—and yet, it lives—it lives to strengthen my arm and resolution—it lives, and will not cease to live, until you are humbled in the dust! For this triumph, and in this hope, I live only! Besides this, what is there

in life to live for now ;—and when he falls, there is nothing then that I shall even care to hate ! God of heaven, how strange it is to me now, that I once should have loved this man—and so loved him—he, who stood over me but a few days ago, and mocked me with the story of his devotion to another, and bade me do her bidding, and commanded me not as a slave only, but as a slave whom he despised ! Ha !—it is his foot-step—he comes—he comes to renew his mockery ! I should not meet him unprepared !”

She went, as she spoke, to a little dressing-case, and, lifting the upper compartment, drew from beneath it a small silver-hilted dagger, which she concealed in her bosom, then, turning to the entrance of the chamber, encountered her betrayer with a smile.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE OUTLAW AND HIS VICTIM—A TRAGEDY SCENE—A BLOW —A DISAPPOINTMENT.

“Observe this creature here, my honored lords,
A woman of a most prodigious spirit.”—JOHN WEBSTER.

HE also smiled as he appeared in sight, but smiled in such a sort as to add fervor to her resolution. There was a recklessness in the scorn which he now betrayed to the woman he had once loved, which was certainly as impolitic as ungenerous ; but having discarded his mask, Saxon seemed anxious to show how ill-favored had been the aspect he had concealed beneath it. He was obtuse enough not to see that the feelings he had trampled had risen up in indignation. He was blind enough to mistake the smile upon her lips for a return of her former feelings of devotion. So it is, that the wisest of men will err at those moments when they need all their wisdom. Sagacious beyond most men of his sphere and neighborhood—particularly conversant, according to his own notion, with women—he was yet deceived without effort, by one with whom his communion had

begun by his own successful deceptions. She had been won in a moment—by a word!—how idle to think that there were depths in her mind which he could not sound—that there were feelings written in her features which he could not read.

Such was the case. The cunning man was at fault. There was that in the bosom of Florence Marbois, which he could neither sound nor see; but it was written that he should be blind in this, as in other matters. *She* had been the victim of her blindness—it was just, for the sake of retribution, that he should have his moment of blindness also.

“Perhaps, you believed me not, Florence, when I spoke to you last; but I spoke nothing but the truth. She is here—here in the swamp, beside you—the woman whom I now love—your rival—your successor.”

It was thus he spoke, in the language of mockery. Her eyes met his glance unshrinkingly. Her cheeks were pale—very pale—for a single instant. In the next moment they were flushed with a redness which did not depart throughout the whole of their conference. Her reply was uttered in tones of calmness which surprised her seducer. He knew not where she got the strength for such equability—he knew not the deep, dark sources of her present consolation.

“You mistake, Edward Saxon. I believed you. If I were a vain woman, it might be some gratification to me to know that my frequent and previous jealousies—idle as they were in some respects—were yet not unfounded. I rightly judged your character. My passions have not been wholly blind—they were always capable of the task—perhaps, not a difficult one—of estimating yours. I know you now, in that matter, to be what I then believed you. If I erred in my conjectures, I have already borne my punishment. The time for error and regret, so far as you are interested, is for ever past with me.”

“I am glad of it, upon my soul—very glad of it. You speak now like a reasonable woman, Florence, and I think the better of you. Now that I find you so calm and sensible, I am free to speak to you with more confidence. You must have discovered by this time, as I have done, that these early notions of love, that so mislead the dreaming girl and the desiring boy, are only so many masks of passion—masks under which the

considerate nature disguises those tumultuous frenzies which might terrify the young from the paths of pleasure and true enjoyment, much more frequently than they could ever entice or gratify. As the experience grows, the mask ceases to be necessary or even useful. It is then that we cast it aside as an encumbrance which, in fact, impedes possession and qualifies delight. I'm sure, Florence, we shall enjoy ourselves much more by understanding these things correctly."

A faint smile covered her lips as she answered :—

"At least, it is quite as well that we should think so—that I should think so. With the conviction that all is lost, a resignation to one's poverty is no less becoming than necessary. But do you only come to tell me this, Edward Saxon? Have you not some other purpose? I knew all this before."

"To say truth, Florence, I came to try you. To see if you had got over that madness that used to possess you in your days of jealousy—"

"And which it gave you pleasure to see?"

"Not so. It vexed—it worried me to bear with your complaints—to listen to your harsh reproaches—to hear your unfounded suspicions."

"But they were not unfounded."

"Till now they were. If I was ever true to woman, Florence, I have been true to you till now. Never had I thought to wander from you, till I met with her."

"And she—she has a name!" exclaimed Florence, with something more of curiosity and interest in her looks and language. "If I am to yield my place to another—if I am to be deprived of that for which I have been so well content hitherto to live, at least—let me know something of her who rises on my ruin? She is beautiful—that I know—that you have told me—but her name? Who is she—what is her family—where did you find her?"

"All in good time, Florence; but you do me wrong, and yourself wrong. She takes no place of yours—she only shares it—and now that you show so calm a temper on the subject, let me tell you that you have risen greatly in my favor. This is the condition of mind to which I would have brought you years ago, if I could. It is the only condition of mind which would make

either of us happy. I am one of those men who are always apt to resent and fly from an effort to restrain my liberty. My heart must share the freedom of my limbs, and that sort of exacting love, which suffers no exercise to my eyes, my thoughts, my actions, is, of all others, so tyrannous a bondage, that, to confess a truth to you, Florence, you became hateful to me when you began to exercise it."

"Ha! hateful!"

"It is true—too true. But do not understand me, Florence, as applying to you any such epithet, *now*. This resignation on your part to my will, places you in a very favorable position; and, if you keep in this mood, there can be no good reason, why we should not be to each other as before. Let it be understood that I am to do as I please, and feel as I please, and go where I please, without having that d——d hunchback at my heels, and without being compelled to hearken to the perpetual growlings of suspicion and complaint—and nobody could love you better than myself; and, if you will only promise me to yield to my wishes—to haunt me no more with your jealousy, and pursue me no more with irksome reproaches—"

"Be sure, Edward Saxon, I never will," said the unhappy woman, with solemnity. "Jealousy of you will never more fill the heart of Florence Marbois—reproaches will never reach your ears from her lips. I have seen the folly of such conduct."

"Why, Florence, this is wisdom. We shall do well after this; and you can bear now to behold me in the arms of Virginia."

"Virginia! is that her name?" asked Florence, with a continued effort at calmness, which, had the outlaw been studiously observant, would never have concealed the tremulous curiosity that fill the heart of the speaker.

"It is a sweet name, Florence, but not so sweet as herself. But you shall see her with your own eyes. You shall behold her charms, if you are willing and can keep down your jealousy—if you can still continue unmoved—if you will not hate her."

"Hate her! I hate *her*? Why should I hate *her*, Edward Saxon? In what has she wronged me? No! no! I will not hate *her*—I can not."

"Well, this is the right temper. By heavens, Florence, but you are wondrously changed for the better within a week. But will you love her, Florence? You should—she is so beautiful, so gentle, and will make you so excellent a companion."

"I can not promise that until I know—"

The speaker stopped abruptly.

"Know what, Florence?"

"Does she love you?"

The more obvious signification of this question was grateful to the outlaw's vanity. He laughed aloud, as he replied—

"Ah, traitor! what would you have? Suppose I tell you, that she does not love me."

"You jest with me."

"Gad, I know not that, Florence. I don't know whether I can say with safety, that she does love me."

"How then came she here?"

"Hum!—I brought her; and, to tell you the truth, not altogether with her own consent. But I doubt if her opposition was earnest, Florence. Like most women—like yourself, Florence—she probably hides the real sentiment under the disguise of one which she does not truly feel. There was no small portion of this sort of trickery in yourself, Florence, when we first met—when we used to meet by the lake—the little lake—"

"Remind me not, I pray you," said the outcast woman, with a sternness of accent that caused the outlaw to gaze at her in suspicious silence for several seconds. With a countenance only half assured, he proceeded:—

"Florence, I half suspect you now. I doubt you are only striving at composure. Your jealousies are returning, and the old reproaches will be renewed—"

"Never! Edward Saxon, never! Before heaven I swear that I can never reproach you again; and as for jealousy—"

"Enough! I am too willing to believe you to insist upon too many assurances."

The outlaw did not see the contemptuous scorn upon the lips which concluded fitly the unspoken sentence.

"I can be happy with you, Florence—nay, I could have been happy and contented with you all along, but that your

unwise suspicions and goading jealousies drove me from your side, and made me not only indifferent to your society but anxious to escape it. Now that you have grown wiser, I trust that no such necessity will again prevail to make either of us less happy, than we should and may be. With Virginia and yourself—”

“But, if she loves you not?” said Florence, coldly.

“I have not said it, Florence; nay—I am not willing to say, and still less to believe it. True, I brought her with less willingness on her part than I could have desired to see; but now that she is here—in my power—at my mercy—she will see—her own common sense—”

“Edward Saxon! you surely mean no violence to the girl?”

“Why, Florence!” exclaimed the outlaw, as he read the horror in her countenance, which was not wanting to the accents of her voice. “Do you think it so hard to persuade the maiden, that I am as proper a man as she could find among a thousand? She, I doubt not, will be as flexible as yourself, when the season comes. Nay, have I not told you already, that I look upon her reluctance as nothing more than that disguise which women naturally put on to hide their real sentiments. She will love me quite as well as another, when she has paid those due sacrifices to false delicacy which form a part of the social religion of the sex. You are all alike, Florence—all alike. Virginia, like yourself, will go through the various stages of passion—first, a pretty fear, that woos you to pursue while it only affects to fly; then a yielding gust of tenderness, that is all tears for a season—then a glow of greater delight—the intoxication of new passion, which is all smiles and burning blushes—then comes the deliberate devotion—then, the jealousy, Florence—the jealousy—which is as certain as the upward progress of the sparks; and, until this stage is over, no peace for either party. Then, as in your case again, and as I rejoice to behold it now, the quiet calm of love, which is resolved to take it on the easiest terms—to suppose it nothing but what it should be, and believe, with the poet, in love, as in the case of higher destinies, that ‘whatever is, is right.’ You can’t conceive, my dear Florence, how much I am rejoiced by the change in you.”

"I'm very glad of it!" was the reply.

"We shall be as happy in the swamp as if the world was in our grasp. With Virginia on one hand, and you, Florence, on the other—satisfied as you both should be, that the heart of a man is capacious enough for both—I could pass my days, I think without any sentiment but that of contented enjoyment, and my nights with no other dreams than those of security and bliss. You have read, Florence—nay, you have heard and seen something of those gay rovers of the gulf—that were kings upon its billows, and, fierce in war—as fierce as its own storms—who were yet as peaceful as its hours of calm, when they surrendered themselves, upon the green palm-covered island, to the embraces of beauty—lying beneath the shade of the plantain and the fig, and, with lip to lip, and heart, melting as it were, into the dissolving sweetness of the mutual heart, they gave up life to the sweet delirium—the pleasant repose—the happy confidence of love. Shall we not have these joys again, Florence? No storms, no fear, no scolding, no caprices—nay, turn not away, my girl—forget that there have been words or looks of unkindness between us. Now, that you have come to a right understanding of what should be the condition of our ties, there can be no cause of discontent or strife hereafter. A kiss, a sweet embrace, dear Florence, in token that there is peace between us."

As these words were spoken, he drew nigh to the woman, whose face had been partially averted while he spoke. A tempest was in her heart the while, and a vexing commotion and a burning heat within her brain. Her hand trembled within her bosom, that trembled also with a degree of emotion which shook her whole frame. Meanwhile, the outlaw, utterly deceived by her deportment, and, perhaps, quite as much deceived by his own desires on the subject—pleased to find her so easily reconciled, and beholding her now, in this alteration of her mood, with something like the renewal of an ancient sentiment—intoxicated no less with the warm fancies which he had been breathing in her ears—approached her, and, passing his arm suddenly about her waist, drew her toward his bosom.

"Yes, dear Florence," he continued, "let this embrace renew the pleasures of the past, and this kiss be the token that all

unkindness is forgotten, and there is nothing now but peace between us."

A shudder passed over her frame as she felt his arm encircle her—for a moment she seemed desirous to shrink from his embrace; but, in another instant, turning as if to requite it, she suddenly extricated one of her arms, which she threw behind her as she exclaimed:—

"Ay, Edward Saxon, peace it shall be, but it shall be the peace of death. Take this!—this! Let this be the token of my forgiveness. This for my wrong. This to the heart that could not value the sole, the worshipping, devotion of such a heart as mine."

She struck, as she spoke, with the little dagger which she had concealed within her bosom. Twice, thrice, she struck, and for a moment the outlaw spoke not—moved not. Astonishment seemed to possess and overcome his faculties. But when she had given the third blow, he threw her from his arms with a violence that sent her against the opposite wall; where she stood, glaring upon him like a tigress, her eyes starting from their orbs with an expression of mingled hate and horror.

But Saxon fell not—he seemed not even to be hurt. He advanced to her without discomposure or irregularity of step, yet every blow had been planted by the hand of the most determined hostility upon his heart.

"Your arm is feebler than your soul, Florence Marbois, else had your hateful purpose been accomplished. Woman, how have you deceived me!"

She lifted the dagger again as he approached her, but, as it met her eyes, she flung the worthless weapon from her hand with a scream that denoted the disappointed fury in her bosom. The steel, small and slender, having met with the resistance of a button when she struck, had yielded and curled up at the contact, without penetrating more deeply than his outer garment. He was utterly unharmed.

"Florence, you are mad," was the remark of Saxon. "This attempt—"

"Ay, man, monster, villain—I am mad. But who has maddened me—who has driven me to this? I am doubly mad that I have failed in what I have sought to do. Feeble hand

—worthless steel! But why stand you looking on me, Edward Saxon?—Will you not kill?—Here, I am ready—my heart is open—my bosom is bared to the blow. Strike, and strike quickly—it is your only chance—for I have sworn, Edward Saxon—sworn by heaven and by hell—by all powers that may yield me power for revenge—that the world shall not contain us both—that one of us must die. I am ready now, Edward Saxon!—I would not live—I hate you too much to breathe with you the same atmosphere of life. Strike! strike! You would have given me peace just now—it is not too late! I wish no other.”

With a desperate hand she tore open the vest which covered her bosom, and the white realm—still so full of beauty and sweetness, if not of innocence and love—those heaving hills on which his head had so often rested in other days—lay bare before his sight. He turned from them without a word. The picture reminded even his cold and careless bosom too warmly of that past, in which his betrayal of her love had so amply justified her present hate.

“I leave you, Florence—I leave you and—forgive you.” He said no more as he parted from her presence, leaving her where she stood—her hair dishevelled, her bosom bare, her eyes wild like those of the maniac, but her ear too dull to hear his last words—her thoughts anywhere but where they should be, and her whole brain in the wildest commotion.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE APE CONSOLES THE HEROINE — THE PRICE OF VENGEANCE

"How's this? Let me look better on't: a contract?

A contract sealed and ratified"—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

No sooner had Saxon disappeared from the apartment, than it was entered by the emissary, Stillyards. This indefatigable urchin had maintained beneath the eaves his habitual practices, and his keen senses had suffered nothing to escape him of the scene which has been just described.

Florence beheld not his entrance. Her eyes were open, but, like those of Lady Macbeth, "their sense was shut." He coolly proceeded across the room, and took up the dagger. With a curious grin of equal scorn and merriment, he examined the worthless instrument which had so amusingly failed to serve the purposes of vengeance. While thus engaged, the returning consciousness of the woman apprized her of his presence. She rapidly crossed the intervening boards that separated them. She grasped his arm with one hand, while with the other, she repossessed herself of the ineffective, but handsome weapon. This she hurled from the window, with a laugh of bitterness that seemed a fitting and mocking commentary upon her own unperforming endeavor.

"Ha! ha! ha! So—you have seen it all, Richard? Weak hand, and worthless steel! Ha! ha! ha! did it make you laugh? No! and why not? He laughed? Did he not? Did you not see him laugh? He laughs now—now! Well! he may laugh! What a fool am I—I that am wronged and ruined—dishonored, scorned, abused, and deserted. What a fool am I to dream of justice—to think that there could be vengeance for the lone and feeble woman. To think that a weak arm like mine, should avenge my weaker heart."

And, as she uttered these wild and passionate words, she cast the arm which she reproached, heedless of the pain, with fearful violence down upon the jamb of the window, the blood spirting as she did so, from the ivory-white and soft flesh—a sight to make even the rude but devoted dwarf shudder, and to awaken in him a degree of sympathy which lifted his nature and turned all his better feelings into pity.

“’Twa’n’t the arm—’twa’n’t the arm, Ma’am Florence—’twas the knife only that wa’n’t fit for nothing, with all its shine and silver about it. If it had been this now, ma’am,” displaying his own heavy bowie blade, as he spoke—“there’s no curl in this!—no mistake!”

“Give it me!” she cried—“this it shall be yet. This feels like vengeance, Richard—there is strength enough in my arm, and resolution still in my heart. I can not fail now—there is still something for which Florence Marbois may live.”

She seized the weighty instrument as she spoke, turned it beneath her eye, grasped with one hand the massy blade, which she strove in vain to bend; then, as if satisfied that it was now only necessary to strike the blow, was about to hurry from the apartment, as if in pursuit of her victim; but the cooler dwarf threw himself between her and the door.

Significantly putting his fingers on his lips as if in token of silence—with an audacity which was unusual, and which, at any earlier day, would have found its immediate and unmeasured rebuke from the lips of the haughty woman—he gently grasped her wrist, and led her back into the darker part of the room out of sight and hearing from the window. Once there, he counselled her to the delay of a few moments, while he left the house, and stealthily examined all its approaches which might conceal a lurking spy. His own practices had necessarily made him properly suspicious of all others, and had endowed him with the skill to provide against all detection.

Finding that the coast was clear, and having ascertained that Saxon and Jones, whom he most apprehended, were gone to some distance in the encampment, he hastily returned to his mistress, after the lapse of a few moments. He found her as much excited as ever, and doubly impatient to proceed in consequence of the unwonted constraint which had been put upon

her. The reasons for this restraint he proceeded to declare in his own rude language:—

“Why, Ma’am Florence, it’s no use for you to go now—Saxon’ll never let you try it again. You can’t get nigh enough for a single dig at him; and if you did, he’d be wide awake for you. He’d take the knife from you, ’fore you could say Jack Robinson, and laugh at you more than ever.”

A glance of fire—a fierce stare—rewarded the speaker. There could be no enmity at that moment more decided, in the estimation of her anguished heart, than that which seemed to insist upon the impracticability of its hope of vengeance.

“What then? Am I to submit? To bear his scorn, his desertion? Is he to walk with booted footstep across my heart? Wherefore do you stop me? Speak, sir, I command you! Tell me other things than this, or be dumb for ever. I will not hear you—I will hear nothing that takes from me the last hope of my heart—which baffles and denies the only prayer which I am prepared to make in life.”

The dwarf was not unwilling to comply. He had no purpose of baffling her vengeance. A bitter smile passed over his squalid cheeks. His mouth widened into a grin, and at another time the malignant fires which darted from his eye, might have awakened in the bosom of his fair companion, a feeling of shuddering disgust. Her own roused and embittered spirit, jaundiced by the passions which inflamed it, sufficed to blind her to the unconcealed malice of his. She saw not the gloating expression of his features—she heard only those accents which promised her the vengeance she desired. He showed her how vain would be her hope to succeed in any renewal of her late attempts, to avenge her wrong in person. He admitted, also, the great difficulty in the way of his succeeding, unless with circumstances greatly in his favor, of a conflict with a man so powerful of frame and so practised in his arms as Saxon; but there was another way, which, while it demanded greater delay, promised to be followed by better results.

“The reg’lators are out, and it’s how to hide is the talk among the beagles. There’s an old man, a preaching methodist, that’s all bite, on t’other side of the ‘Big Black,’ at a place called Zion’s Hill—he’s been a mustering more than a week

now, and it's only because he don't know which way to set his nose, that he ain't on trail after the beagles afore this. He's got a son that barks with us, and we know from him how the cat jumps. Then there's a lad, one Wat Rawlins, that's been a contriving again us too. Jones is more afraid of him than t'other, 'cause he don't say much, and Badger always preaches what he's guine to do; now, it's only to show this here chap, Rawlins, how to find the track for Cane Castle, and let him make a start on a sudden, and it's all mush with Saxon. There's two dogs that barks between us and Rawlins, and it's only to send 'em off sarching for John Cole's mare; then Rawlins can bring his men into the swamp unbeknowing to all, and it's a better knife than yours or mine, Ma'am Florence, that does the business."

"I see! I see! and you will go to these men, Richard, you will bring the avenger into the swamp—you will show them where *he* sleeps—ha!"

To these eager demands and exclamations the answer of the dwarf was slow. He had his reasons for deliberation—he had his own bargain to make; and, with the policy of a more cunning tradesman, his reluctance to answer the requisitions of the superior, grew in proportion to the eagerness of her demand. That she might be avenged amply by the means he suggested, and by his means, he proceeded to reiterate. The particular process was all shown—his own consent to do the office, which could evidently be done by no one so well as himself, was the only point upon which he hesitated to declare himself.

"I will reward you, Richard—you shall have all—everything—money, jewels—everything, I repeat—for why," she added mournfully, as if to herself—"why should I keep aught? I shall have little need for gold or jewels when that is done—little need, and oh! how much less desire—speak, Richard, tell me that I may rely on you for this last service. Be faithful as you have been before, and take what you will—take all that I have to bestow."

"You say it, Ma'am Florence—you'll promise me," demanded the dwarf with an eagerness equalling her own, while, in his gloating eyes an expression of anxious desire, might have been

easily read by any observer less blinded than the woman to whom it was addressed.

"Have I not said? Surely I promise. Why should you doubt—why hesitate? Have I ever failed where I promised, Richard? Have you not ever had your reward from me? I repeat, you shall have, when you have done me this service—when you have brought the officers of justice into this den of thieves—when the chief villain of the band is a captive, and the hope from his heart, like that from my own, is gone for ever—you shall have all the wealth—the money and the jewels—which I have! Nothing shall be withheld of value that you may demand. You shall be my heir, Richard—you inherit all!"

"All in your power to bestow!" slowly spoke the dwarf, repeating a portion of her previous words. "'Twas that you said, Ma'am Florence."

"Yes—again I say it: you shall have all in my power to bestow."

"It's a promise, Ma'am Florence—good as Bible oath."

"As if I had sworn it!" solemnly replied the woman.

He caught her wrist eagerly in his hand, drew her toward him, and, rising on tip-toe, whispered in her ear. As the communication, whatever it was, reached her senses, she recoiled from his contact—shook herself free from his grasp, and, receding a step, regarded him with an expression of countenance in which contempt and scorn were mingled equally.

The eye of the abashed dwarf sank beneath the fire-flashing glances of hers; his frame faltered, and an effort which, at the same moment, he made to speak, died away in confused and feeble accents, which were utterly unintelligible and almost unheard.

Meanwhile, various were the thoughts which coursed rapidly through the mind of Florence Marbois. Anger and vexation at first were predominant feelings—so strong in the first moment after his communication had been heard, as almost to obliterate, during the same brief space, all memory of the vengeance which she had sworn against her seducer. But very soon these feelings passed away.

"I must be proud no more," were the words which at length

broke from her lips. "I mock myself with these shadows. Richard," she said, advancing as she spoke, and extending her hand, "it shall be as you say. All that is left me to bestow, shall be yours, when you have accomplished my vengeance."

He grasped the extended hand, and carrying it to his lips, covered it with such caresses as a she-bear might have lavished upon her last cub in licking it into shape. Florence Marbois had sunk wofully in her own estimation. Her pride was gone, and she had nothing to live for; but she withdrew the hand that suffered from the slaver of the deformed, with a strong expression of disgust.

"Enough, Richard. And now to the prosecution of these plans."

It will not need that we follow the dialogue in all its details. It is sufficient for us to say, that Stillyards, being familiar, by reason of his espionage, with all the circumstances of the chief robbers in the swamp, and with all those more prominent sources of danger which they feared, was better prepared, than Saxon or Jones could have believed, to devise an effectual plan for their capture. It was not long before he was despatched by his mistress from her presence.

There were new reasons added to old ones, why she should desire to send him forth as speedily as possible. He was not simply a means of vengeance—he had become a creditor; and the miserable debtor, who, though ruined, had still in her soul some glimpses of the better nature from which she had fallen, began to shudder at the humiliating moral bondage which such a condition always seems to imply. The instrument of her necessity was an object of her disgust. Hitherto, she had been able to reward him with money; now, he felt the large increase of his power, and his demands had grown in proportion. He was become ambitious—money no longer answered his desires; and he, who by reason of his low birth, vulgar life, and deformed person, had never been able to attach the affections of another, now aimed to secure the highest and finest and sweetest of all human affections, as the reward of his ministry.

"And wherefore should I scruple at this?" was the demand which Florence Marbois made of herself, as if in self-justification, when she was left alone. "It is at best a word—a pledge

which is dissolved in the very hour which brings Edward Saxon to his doom. She is a fool, a worse than idiot, who survives life's purposes—and I have but one purpose in life. That satisfied, and I may well assure this vain and miserable game-maker that all shall then be his which is in the power of Florence Marbois to bestow."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

NEW READINGS IN OLD PLAYS—CATASTROPHE OF HAMLET NOT IN ANY FORMER EDITION.

"Good sir, softly: you ha' done me a charitable office."—*Winter's Tale*.

LET us now return to our Thespian in the swamp. We left him, with Jones, skimming along in a little dug-out over the turbid waters of the Chitta-Loosa. Jones delighted in fishing, and found sufficient employment in pursuing this occupation. Horsey seemed content to be a spectator; but the wily outlaw very well knew that his content would be of no very long duration, unless the food on which he better fed than anything besides—the oily applause of the audience—was brought in, to quiet an appetite that no measure of success could satiate. Accordingly, he suffered not his own vocation so far to occupy his attention, as to make him regardless of his companion's temper.

From the moment when he cast forth his lines, he began to ply the actor with stage reminiscences, and to challenge his opinions upon all stage matters. These requisitions were all-important to the perfection of the proposed establishment at Benton. Finding deception easy on all kindred subjects, Jones enlarged his fictions. He suggested a grand scheme of theatrical organization, which was to extend itself over the whole country, from West Tennessee down to the bay of Biloxi. A company was to be planned, with corporate powers, in several of the southwestern states, which was to build theatres in all eligible places, and divide the year in separate seasons of three

months in each of them. The management was to be conferred on Horsey. Never did the innocent flats of our backwoods suffer the delusion of a mammoth bank, or a mammoth railroad, to take such complete hold of their credulous imaginations. Like the schemes of these great companies, generally, the wily outlaw made it appear, that the plan was not only to be pleasant and profitable, but excessively patriotic.

"At least," said this experienced stockdealer, "at least, my dear Horsey, we shall make, as salaried officers, though the stockholders lose. The profits, if enough to pay us, are enough for the patriotism of the thing."

"But it must be profitable to all parties," said Horsey, whose morality was somewhat less discursive than that of his companion.

"Ay, ay—to be sure it must. The country will be a great gainer in money and morals, and—"

"Certainly, such a diffusion of Shakspeare alone, must have that effect."

"It will. That alone should be a sufficient consideration to induce the state to subscribe largely; and I have no doubt that she will, when her legislators are made to perceive the patriotism of the thing. Then, if we can get a charter for a banking-house with a capital of ten millions, our triumph is complete. We can establish houses everywhere—raise companies—issue moneys—do anything. Our labors being for the public good, we can appropriate lands and tenements, I am of opinion, without ever paying for them."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Horsey, who had evidently less legal learning than his companion.

"And why impossible? Ours is a public work. Our charter, it is true, declares it to be private; but it is admitted that our labors are likely to be productive of public good, and would it not be monstrous if a single citizen, here and there, should resist a measure that is for the good of the whole?"

"True, there is something in that," said Horsey; "but is it so clear that we can take private property at pleasure for the public good?"

"Certainly—the majority declares what is for the public good, and makes the law accordingly."

"But—the constitution—what does the constitution stand for then—of what use?"

"Nay, I don't know that. For my part I never did see the use of a constitution at all; and it is clear to me, that it could be of no sort of effect against our company, if we can only get a charter for it. That we can do, if we only pay two or three lawyers handsomely, and secure a few of the most famous orators at a fine salary. They'll gull the flats by fine speeches which shall prove to them that they're the most noble, patriotic folks under the sun; and we'll pick their teeth, while their jaws are on the stretch, listening to these fine sayings. Two to one on it, Horsey, that in a year's time, the state will lend us a million to begin with, and take stock in the great Mississippi Shakspearean and Thespian company, to three times that amount."

"I'm not so sanguine, Jones," said the other, "but I'm sure if it would do so, the stock would be a cursed sight better than that of half of these banks and railroads. As for the banks, it's clear, they've swamped all the planters; and as for the railroads, I reckon we shall have to leave them in the swamps, where they'll stick for ever. Your plan, I'm afraid, is almost too grand a one. Something on a smaller scale now, would be more likely to be successful."

"Lord love you, Horsey, my dear fellow, you know nothing about our people when you talk so. It's nothing but grand schemes that go down with them. They can only understand the incomprehensible—they can only admire what is beyond their calibre. Tell them of small schemes which are possible and practicable, and which might yield them moderate profits and be of some service, and they will turn up their noses in disgust. They despise little projects. But get up a grand Religious Steam Association; or a company for connecting Pensacola with San Jacinto by means of chain or floating bridges; or a line of Balloon Stages to the North Star, or a Patent Process for Converting Bad Planters into Great Merchants—propose some such moderate matters to them as these, and they'll take stock directly. They've lately formed a society in New England for keeping the peace among the potentates in Europe, and there's not an old woman in all the villages that don't subscribe

a shilling weekly to prevent Louis Philippe from kicking the emperor of Austria, and arrest the czar in his indecorous attempts to void his quid in the face of Sultan Mahmoud. That's a society now that's likely to be profitable."

The outlaw was about to pass, by a very natural transition, from the consideration of these grand and patriotic modes for picking the pockets of the people, to a short analysis of the half-exploded and vulgar methods of doing the same thing as practised in ancient times. He was prepared to show that the old highway custom of bidding a true man "stand and deliver," was altogether, and happily, abrogated by such small legal processes as are more comprehensively described under the general designation of charters. It would have been very easy, indeed, for one so well versed in the inquiry as himself, to show—what the reader is already prepared to believe—that the "Border Beagles" were, indeed, "chartered libertines" of the same class; yet, as they did not transact business on a scale so magnificent, and as they were rather less ostentatious in their operations, they could not so openly challenge the admiration of mankind.

It caused the worthy outlaw, indeed, a sigh, when he reflected that all that was necessary to enable the company under whose authority he performed his operations, to become shrined in the admiration and estimation of the people from the Tar river to the Colorado, was a simple instrument under the hands of a state legislature, which a fine orator could readily procure, and a docile representation would delight to grant. A change of name might, indeed, be necessary, and, perhaps, a declaration of objects slightly differing from that which were in reality entertained. A people, it seems, who are fitted for self-government, must yet have its expenses concealed from their sight, and its penalties disguised under the name of pleasures. "Border Beagles" was a good name—easily articulated—but to get a charter for far more increased operations, it might be necessary to change it into something of a more imposing, and less vague signification—"The Great Southwestern Transportation and Specie Deposit Company," would be a longer and more specific title—long and loose enough to obtain charters from any six states in the Union.

Jones was full to overflowing with these ideas and their trib-

utaries; but Horsey was something less of a moralist and politician than the outlaw; and his undisguised yawns soon apprized his companion of the necessity of returning to the ground from which they had episodically departed. Even the establishment of great houses for stage-playing, were as nothing to the play itself, in the imagination of the actor; and when his attention flagged in considering the former, it revived with double force and interest when the latter topic was resumed.

Jones professed himself tired of law and morality, and begged that Horsey would restore the tone of his mind by a specimen. One specimen begat two, two begat three; specimens produced varieties of readings in favorite passages; and in twenty minutes, with a patient and applauding auditor, Hamlet was "himself again." Never had he read so well before—never had his action been so flexible and felicitous.

"Cautiously, my dear fellow," said Jones, with a warning voice—"cautiously, and trim the boat—she dips already, and it won't take much to cover her bends."

"Yes, yes!" impatiently replied the actor, "I see—I'll take care;" and then he returned to his theme, which had been the discussion of one of the readings of a favorite actor.

"Now you see, Mr. Jones, in the reading of that passage, Forrest is clearly wrong:—

" 'Hang out our banners!'

he says with an exclamatory pause; then adds,

" 'On the outward walls,
The cry is still they come.'—

Now, why should he depart from the old style of reading, which is thus:—

" 'Hang out our banners on the outward walls;
The cry is still they come!'

Why should we suppose that the coming of the enemy is only announced on the outward walls? The cry is everywhere—the whole castle hears it. Macbeth himself announces it, he being *within the castle* at the time. In this reading the passage is without sense. The truth is, that the intelligence having reached Macbeth that the enemy is still coming—a fact, which his previous confidence in the weird sisters has led him to doubt

—he gives those orders which would be given even now by every commander : ‘It is time to hang out our defiance—they have come near enough to see it. It will show them that we are prepared for them—it will show our own people that we do not fear the foe.’ It was not customary to hang out the banners except on occasions of state and danger. In old times, banners were more costly things than they are now. They were covered with gold and blazonry of a very rich and perishable character. Even now, they are never hung out except in cases of ceremony, or in the expectation of actual conflict. They are kept carefully within the castle till the approach of the foe, and then, with the soldiers, advanced to the walls. The same scene in which this passage occurs, describes, as stage directions, the entry of Macbeth, with drums and colors, *within the castle*, followed by Seyton and the soldiers. They were then about to go forth to the defence of the walls, the sentinels on the watch having warned them that the time for actual conflict was now at hand, and the hanging the banner on the outward wall, was the only mode by which the proper defiance of the defenders was to be displayed.”

“Clearly you are right,” said Jones, whose turn it was now to yawn.

“Now for that famous and much-disputed passage—

“‘She should have died hereafter.’”

“Mind the boat,” remonstrated Jones, who felt his little cockleshell becoming momentarily more and more capricious under the increasing earnestness of the actor.

“Ay, ay !” said the other, reciting—

“‘She should have died hereafter ;—

There would have been a time for such a word,

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow——’”

“By Jupiter ! Horsey, we shall be over if you don’t be very careful.”

“No fear—no fear !” said the actor impatiently, as he hurried with the passage—

“‘And to-morrow, and to-morrow,

Creeps in this petty pace, from day to day,

To the last syllable of recorded time ;——’”

Jones, at this recorded time, was constrained to give all his attention to the trim of his boat.

“‘And all our yesterdays,’”

Proceeded the actor with the solemn sententiousness, and gloomy moral reflection of the tyrant at this period, when the last evils of life were accumulating about him, making him “sick at heart.” He, Horsey, was as thoroughly blind to the wriggings of the outlaw, as the outlaw was now become indifferent to the readings of the actor.

“By G—d!” muttered the former, we shall have a capsized.

“‘And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusky death. Out, out, brief candle!’”

Here the action of Horsey verified the apprehensions of the outlaw. “That putting out of the candle did the business,” said Jones, afterward.

“Life’s but a——Phew!” The water rushing into Horsey’s ears, nose, and mouth at this moment, put an effectual extinguisher upon the sad, moral reflection of Macbeth, and ended the new reading of the much-disputed passage. The boat went over in spite of all the outlaw’s efforts to maintain her equilibrium, and Macbeth ended his speech by a puffing, plunging, and blowing, which might have done honor to the wind-bags of a porpoise.

“Phew! Jones—what the devil’s the matter?” was his cry, as he rushed to the top of the muddy river.

“‘Out, out, brief candle!’” exclaimed Jones, struggling to the banks. “I warned you, Mr. Horsey—I warned you several times.”

“Warned me! How warned me?—warned me of what?”

“Of tilting the boat.”

“The devil you did—I never heard you.”

“‘Life’s but a walking shadow,’” said Jones, repeating a fragment of the passage; “but, however shadowy, you’ll find it difficult to walk where you are. While you have life for it, Mr. Horsey, you must strike out—the water’s at least twenty feet over your head.”

“So I find,” replied the actor, striking for the shore. With some difficulty he scrambled up the oozy elevations, borrowing

from the liberal banks as he went, a portion of their capital at every step.

"Good G—d, Jones—my Hamlet!" exclaimed the unfortunate histrion, surveying the ruined garment, which had swallowed up so many goodly bales of his father's cotton. "My Hamlet—a splendid black silk velvet jacket, fly-trunks, and mantle—magnificently bugled—cost me, at Stubb's, three hundred and sixty dollars—and now utterly ruined. D—n the boat—that I should have trusted myself in such a trap as that!"

"Don't be angry, my dear fellow," said Jones, with a grin which conveyed very equivocal consolation. "Once under way, and you will soon be able to replace it, I trust. That scheme of ours—the Grand Mississippi Shakspearean and Thespian Company—"

"Look you, Mr. Jones, don't talk to me of schemes. Let's go back where I can get my bags. I must change. I feel like a drowned rat. I'm as slimy as an eel. It'll take me a week's washing to get this d——d ooze out of my hair."

"No, no! not half so long," said the other, "I was once much longer in the mud, and got clean in three days."

This was said with great gravity. Horsey looked suspiciously upon the speaker, and for the first time, a latent notion seemed to waken in his mind that he had been quizzed a little; but, just at this moment, his eyes were attracted to the opposite banks.

"'Gad, Jones, I must hide—there are women yonder. Who are they?"

The actor stole behind some stunted bushes, from which he peeped out upon the distant cavalcade.

"That's Brown Bess—Bess Yarbers, as I live—and that's my Juliet—my pretty Mary Clayton!—Eh! Jones, am I not right? What the devil do they want here?"

"Hush! Come to join our company, I suspect," replied Jones, with some anxiety in his voice.

"'Gad, I'm glad of it," exclaimed the actor, with a delight which made him quite forget the hurts of his Hamlet. "That Mary will make the loveliest Juliet, the sweetest Ophelia, the dearest Desdemona that ever was smothered when she should

have been kissed. I told Bess to make an actress of her— I knew what she could do. It's a great acquisition, Jones. I'll go and meet 'em."

"What! in that trim?"

"Ah, d—n the boat!" was the bitter exclamation of the enthusiastic actor, as, sinking back into his place of concealment, he suffered the new-comers to pass from sight, and impatiently waited the moment when Jones might deem it proper to permit of their return to the encampment.

The latter busied himself in recovering the boat, which had drifted a mile below, and was only kept from the embraces of the Mississippi by the branches of a fallen tree, among which it got entangled. By dint of swimming and wading, the outlaw recovered it, and Horsey was with difficulty persuaded to resume his seat in a fabric, in which he could use no action, and accordingly could not speak. To deny him to suit the action to the word, was to make him dumb; and equally soaked, silent, and sad, the luckless actor suffered himself to be paddled back to the place whence he set forth, only consoled under his misfortune by the reflection that he should soon see the lovely little damsel in whose sight, it may be said in this place, he had found quite as much, or even more favor, than she had found in his.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

JUSTICE IN THE SWAMP—TALL SWEARING—MOLE PRACTICE.

"This subtle world, this world
Of plots and close conspiracy."—SHIRLEY.

BUT Horsey soon found it was no such easy matter to behold this damsel. The course of true love was not permitted to run smooth in his case, any more than in that of Romeo. It was not the policy of Jones to suffer the actor to come in contact with the Yarbers family. He knew the intimacy which already existed between him and Brown Bess; and, as the reader may have seen, the adherence of John Yarbers to the brotherhood, did not imply any attachment of his wife in the same quarter. Awkward revelations, for which the fraternity were not yet prepared, might have resulted from a meeting of that dame with Horsey; and Jones made his arrangements accordingly to prevent it.

But Jones could not be everywhere, however ubiquitous may have been his desires; and Brown Bess, by some means, found out that Horsey was at Cane Castle. She probably had caught a glimpse of him as he emerged from his oozy bath, in the waters of the Chitta-Loosa; or, as is equally probable, John Yarbers was partially in the habit of serving two masters. He may have shared some of the secrets of the beagles, with his larger, if not his better half. How she arrived at her knowledge, however, is very unimportant to our narrative. It is enough, that, once possessed of this knowledge, all the strategies of feminine policy were put in exercise to defeat the uncharitable designs of Jones.

It was not a mere female curiosity which Bess sought to gratify in once more desiring to see the actor. Far from it. Other and more serious desires filled her mind; and the evi-

dent admiration—however strangely shown—with which Horsey regarded her daughter, had inspired her with the hope of connecting Mary Clayton with better fortunes, and less doubtful family connections, than those to which she had unhappily—and to do her justice—unwittingly bound herself.

Horsey was a wild chap—that she knew; but his heart was in the right place, and he was the son of one of the most substantial of the small planters in Mississippi. Old John Horsey had what he possessed of property free from debt, and was, therefore, more independent than most of his class. As he owed nothing, he had no favors to ask of the Brandon bank, and could keep back his cotton till a favorable market. Alas! for Mississippi—nay, for half the southwest—that his policy had not been more general among the agriculturists of that region. The debtor is everywhere at the mercy of his creditors, and we are all debtors.

But a truce to this; and, to sum up in brief, Brown Bess contrived to find a way to the actor. There was a moment when the outlaw, to whom Cane Castle was given in charge, during the absence of the master-beagle of the band, was necessarily withdrawn; and, seizing upon this moment, the persevering dame sought Horsey with success. At this interview, the poor actor was utterly overwhelmed by the tidings which he heard. At first, indignation seized upon him to think how he had been imposed upon and laughed at; and he was for seeking the outlaw, and punishing him in the midst of the encampment. But the cooler woman checked these ebullitions of mortified vanity and impatience. She showed him the danger of this proceeding, and counselled him to a policy as deep and quiet as that of the beagles. Under her direction, arrangements were made for his escape; and, wisely leaving all these to her, our actor, now considerably sobered on the subject of his grand steam company of theatricals, in which the state was expected to subscribe so largely, was content to play second fiddle for awhile in this political duet.

Perhaps, he was the more readily reconciled to this inferior position by the presence of a third person, who had been judiciously provided to appear at the nick of time by the calculating Mrs. Yarbers. This was Mary Clayton. After her appearance,

the mother might have made what arrangements she pleased. That nothing should be wanting to her schemes, she made away with herself after awhile, leaving the two children together—the babes in the wood—Horsey being as much a dreaming boy and as full of heart and enthusiasm, as if he never had known any of the world's experience; and Mary—poor Mary—as simple of soul and innocent of mind, as the adhesive, dependent, and docile daughter of Polonius herself.

It was strange with what rapidity the moments flew, when these two were left together. There—in that deep and quiet wood—thickly shaded by the intricate forests, that had never echoed to the dull cleaving blow of the destroying axe—on the edge of that dark, mysterious water, and with no sounds in their ears, but those which seemed to invite them to mutual sensibilities—sounds of birds and insects that hummed beside and above them, without any regular song, and with efforts that seemed to imply wakefulness and not work—life, rather than exertion—the hearts of the twain, in which the fire had been fanned, if not kindled into flame, before, now warmed with a mutual ardor, and gushed freely with the sweet waters of a mutual affection.

“It will do,” was the whisper of the mother of the girl, as through the leaves of a copse on one hand, where she had concealed herself, she saw the ardent amateur impress—having not the fear of Ned Mabry in his eyes—his second kiss upon the lips of the trembling and very much frightened damsel; and heard his pledges of love and his promises of marriage. Then the old dame contrived to reappear and separate the parties.

The very day on which Saxon bore away Virginia Wilson to the recesses of Cane Castle, our amorous actor might have been seen on old “dot-and-go-one,” his father's steed, with Mary Clayton perched behind him, going as fast as his passions could drive, and his decrepit steed would permit, in the hope of finding a convenient magistrate willing to officiate for love in a hurry, after the fashion of the Gretna blacksmith.

The policy of Dame Bess might be supposed rather censurable by the very staid and starched prudes of a metropolitan city; but let them not bite their thumbs too inveterately. The

old lady was desirous of getting her lovely daughter out of the swamp, and freeing her from that miserable connection with a clan of robbers, from which, under existing circumstances, she could not free herself. She was anxious to marry her to a man of family and substance, and she knew that she could trust the honor of Horsey, to transact the business of Hymen, according to the state laws on that subject made and provided. She could have wished, it is true, that the affair might have been conducted with more deliberation, and under her own eyes; but as this could not be the case, she was too wise a woman to suffer such matters to stand in the way of primary objects; and, counselling the couple how to keep the narrow road on the swamp, which would lead them, by a short ten miles, to Squire Nawls', she sent them off, with a God-speed, to be happy after a fashion that, however constantly practised for six thousand years, has not yet fallen into disuse.

One incident, which occurred before the departure of Horsey from Cane Castle, should not be unnoted. While yet utterly undreaming of the revelations subsequently made by Brown Bess, and while still perfectly persuaded that he was member only of a brotherhood of Thespians, who, if ignorant, were yet innocent, the enthusiastic amateur found an opportunity of making his way to the presence of Florence Marbois. Regarding her as the prima donna, the great gun, the tragic muse of the company, he could not refrain—though counselled to beware of the weapon of her husband, whom Jones described as, "worse than a Turk for jealousy"—from contriving an interview with one from whose great powers he promised himself no small support in the personation of his loftier characters. The play at cross-purposes between them which followed this interview was as mysterious to both, as it would have been ludicrous to a spectator at all aware of their true history. Horsey addressed her as Lady Macbeth, or Portia, or Constance, and she replied to him in such language as would have suited well the auditories of a conscious knave. The poor actor was utterly confounded, and did not feel at all satisfied with, however much, as an amateur, he might admire, the lofty scorn which looked out from her eyes, and the contemptuous language which rose upon her lips, in reply to all his high-flown speeches. She

sooner comprehended his true position than he hers. Perhaps she had some inkling of the truth before.

"You are mistaken, sir, in me, if not in yourself. You have been imposed upon, and are in a den of thieves, from which you had best escape as soon as possible. Leave me, sir."

"But, my dear Mrs. Clifford," was the objurgatory opening of the bewildered actor.

"Clifford! Begone, sir—you are mad. I tell you, you are among knaves and thieves. You are gulled, imposed upon. Go home to your parents."

"Was ever woman in such humor wooed?"

was the slowly-spoken sentence of Horsey, as the haughty Florence, after this scornful counsel, withdrew from his presence.

Two hours after this interview, he was made to comprehend its true meaning and the manner in which he had been played upon, by the more painstaking and common-sense personage whom he was about to select as a mother-in-law. It might not have been so easy for her to subdue the wrath which her revelations excited in his mind, had it not been for her lovely daughter; and that movement of the maternal tactician which left the two children to their own cogitations. The result of these cogitations we have seen, in the departure of the happy pair, riding double on "dot-and-go-one," in search of the country squire.

But one thing qualified the otherwise unmixed joy of the actor in this novel situation. It was the necessity of leaving his saddle-bags behind him, with the best of his theatrical wardrobe. This necessity occasioned some serious fears, but the better baggage which filled its place, soon reconciled him to, if it did not make him absolutely forgetful of, his loss.

Let us now return to Harry Vernon, whom we left, attended by the faithful Jamison and the two constables, on his way to Mr. Justice Nawls, to undergo his examination for the murder of Thomas Horsey, Esquire.

The justice was a plain farmer-looking person, very ignorant of books and refinement, but with some knowledge of men and things, which, on the borders of every country, is by far the better sort of knowledge. He came out of his fields, and in the

same condition in which he used his hoe, he sat down to make his examination. He was in his shirt-sleeves, which were rolled up to the elbow; his bosom was bare, and none of the cleanest; and the perspiration, discolored by the dust through which he had been, stood in dark dots upon his cheeks and forehead.

What a lecture on American jurisprudence would have been written by that profound spinster, Harriet Martineau, or that profound sea-attorney, Captain Basil Hall, or that social martinet, Colonel Hamilton, could they have been present at this examination. Justice Nawls had no need of books, or statutes, or authorities, and still less occasion did he seem to have for tablets and a clerk. The proceedings were summary enough. There were two sly fellows who swore to several suspicious circumstances against our hero. It was proved that Horsey and Vernon were seen together last—that the time of their separation was unknown—and that, a short time after, poor Horsey was found in the woods bored through with bullets, dirked in sundry places, his ribs literally riddled and laid bare—and his bloody coat and breeches were finally produced in damning confirmation of this tragedy.

Such was the testimony of Augustus Mortimer and Edward Montmorenci. The *alias* of a rogue is usually a very ear-taking concatenation of syllables; and, *par parenthese*, what an adroit rascal is Davy Hines, the *celebrated* South Carolina swindler (all rascals are celebrated in North America, while great statesmen, orators, poets, and actors, are simply notorious), in the selection of his temporary *nom de guerre*. He is for the nonce, an Allston, a Hamilton, a Rutledge, a Berkely, a Singleton, or a Livingston. Sometimes he condescends to be a Hayne, or a Benton, and he has even been known, on trending farther east, to contract himself into a Webster or an Adams.

Colonel Augustus Mortimer swore with singular precision and confidence, and Major Marcus Montmorenci followed him. Vernon examined these two worthies with the utmost care and vigilance, but they were as impenetrable as they had shown themselves incorrigible. They just swore to enough to place the offence at his door, without committing themselves by the positive asseveration that they had seen him do it. They were old practitioners, in one form or other, in half the courts of

Mississippi and knew all the quirks of justice, however little they might have really cared about its principles.

Poor Vernon was in a quandary. He saw that Squire Nawls could do no less than commit him, on the strength of the testimony offered; and though this testimony fell short of convicting him of the offence, he yet could not but feel that the refined rascals whose deposition had been just taken, had wrought him some very troublesome meshes, from which it would not be so easy to extricate himself upon trial. Still the awkwardness, if not the danger, of his own situation troubled him less than his particular arrest at such a moment. There was the affair of Carter, his friend, which he was anxious to bring to a conclusion which might save him as well as the miserable father of the very lovely Virginia. And she—just won, and so soon lost. Ah! reader, if you have a heart at all, and have not forgotten all the love-passages of your boyhood's days, think of the thousand privations involved in that separation.

If Vernon was annoyed, poor Jamison, his Alabama friend, was utterly confounded at the aspect of his affairs. Unwilling to believe the youth guilty, for whom he had taken a liking as extreme as sudden, he was yet staggered by the closeness of the testimony against him—the nice linking together of the circumstances as declared by the joint evidence of Messrs. Mortimer and Mortmorenci, and the grave, deliberate, and very genteel appearance of those worthy witnesses. It was in vain that he added to the cross-examination of Vernon, as many questions as, in his sagacity, he thought might be instrumental in bringing out a difference in their statements. His efforts were more perplexing to himself than to the witnesses, and with a groan that came from the bottom of his heart, and was almost a growl, he gave up all further attempts at examination. So, also, did Vernon himself, and Justice Nawls proceeded to write out and sign the commitment of the prisoner, for further and final trial—a manual performance, not so easy to one whose skill in penmanship was of that “d——d cramp” sort, which bothered Tony Lumpkin.

The deed was done, however, and the constables were just beginning to bustle about for the resumption of their charge, in conveying Vernon to prison, when a hubbub was heard without.

and the accents of a voice which, to the ear of our hero, seemed no less sweet than familiar.

"Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer," cried one from without.

"By heavens!" exclaimed Harry Vernon, "that is Mr. Horsey himself."

"So it is, Harry, my boy," cried the actor, rushing in and bearing on his arm the shrinking form of the half-affrighted Mary Clayton, whose cheeks, glowing with the deepest tints of the carnation, betrayed the mingled effects of a ten-mile ride with her lover, and the not unpleasant novelty which she felt to exist in such a situation.

"Who else but Horsey," exclaimed the delighted actor—"who but the young Lochinvar," and he concluded by singing a stanza from the popular song of that name, by which he communicated the tenor of his love-adventure, and the reason of his appearance with his fair companion.

"They'll have fleet steeds that follow, Harry, my boy," he continued, "though, truth to speak, had they started as soon on the chase of old Bowline, as they did after Lochinvar, Tom Horsey would have won no bride to-day. You recollect my little Juliet, Harry?—Mary Clayton? Come forward, Mary—don't be shy—don't be scary—it's Mr. Vernon, that came with me to your house—Mr. Harry Vernon; and there's the squire, that's to make us man and wife—and these gentlemen, why I, take it, they're all friends to a frolic and a good fellow, when he's about to go off, like a comedy, in a happy ending."

"Mr. Horsey, I was never more rejoiced to see any one in my life, than I am to see you," said Vernon. "You've come at the most providential moment for my safety."

"Your safety!"

"Yes—I am here before the magistrate charged with murdering you."

"The devil you say!"

"However strange, it is no less than truth. Squire Nawls, let me introduce to you my friend, Mr. Thomas Horsey, of Raymond, the gentleman with whom I travelled, and whom I stand suspected of having killed. You see that as he is alive, I can not have murdered him."

Squire Nawls looked bewildered, and turned inquisitively to Messrs Mortimer and Montmorenci. An incredulous and sarcastic smile sat upon the countenance of the first named of these gentlemen. A brief pause followed.

"You see, gentlemen," continued Vernon, turning to them also, "that the body which you found and buried was that of some other person, and the clothes which you have shown—"

"Were those of Mr. Thomas Horsey, and no other," said Mr Augustus Mortimer, with the utmost coolness, and a quiet, imperturbable composure, that absolutely shocked the Alabamian, whom the promise of a change in the color of Vernon's fortunes had provoked to a shouting, cheering, and dancing, which, for several moments, utterly banished silence and stateliness from the hall of justice.

"That is not Mr. Thomas Horsey," continued Mr. Mortimer; "we buried the poor young gentleman with our own hands. Did we not, major?"

Major Montmorenci confirmed this statement, by a conclusive nod to Justice Nawls.

"The devil you did!" exclaimed Horsey, utterly aghast with the reckless hardihood with which the lie was spoken.

"Yes, poor fellow! he lies in the wood, a little way beyond the lower fork that leads to the two ferries."

"The devil he does!" continued the actor, with increasing astonishment, as he listened to the manner in which his body was disposed of.

"Yes, we can show you the grave at any moment. We cut his name, T. H., with the year, in the bark of a beech that stands over the spot."

"You were very good," said Horsey.

"No, no, not at all; it was only common charity!"

"Pray, my good fellow," said Horsey, dropping the arm of Mary Clayton, and crossing over to where Mr. Augustus Mortimer stood, on the left hand of Justice Nawls, and looking him in the face with as much curiosity as astonishment—"pray, my good fellow, who may you be—what may be your name? I am, in truth, very anxious to know."

"Augustus Mortimer, Esq.," was the calm reply, "son of the

Hon. Bannister Mortimer, judge of the United States district-court, in West Tennessee."

"You are, are you?—and you, sir"—to the other witness—"pray, oblige me with your name and connections?"

The answer was equally prompt and civil.

"Major Marcus Montmorenci, last from Virginia, a late settler in the Choctaw purchase."

"And you are sure, gentlemen, that you buried Thomas Horsey, of Raymond, under a beech-tree on the lower road to the ferry, and it was over his body that you were good enough to mark T. H., with the year—perhaps you put a death's-head and cross-bones above the inscription?"

"No, sir, we put nothing but the initials, and the year; and we did not cut them as well or deeply as we could have wished, owing to the dullness of our knives," said Mr. Mortimer.

"And you are sure that it is my body—that is, the body of Tom Horsey—that you so charitably put from sight in that place?"

"Very certain."

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, my dear sir, these questions are very unnecessary and your manner is somewhat offensive. When I tell you, that my poor friend, Tom Horsey, was seldom out of my sight and company for a spell of four years at least, that we lived together, travelled together, and slept together at different and long periods, you certainly can't doubt that I ought to know him."

"And you, sir, have been equally intimate?"

"Equally," said the more sententious Montmorenci.

It would be difficult to describe the expression of Horsey's face, as he hearkened to these cool asseverations, and marked the stolid composure of the two.

"Really, gentlemen, you must excuse me, if I ask a few more questions. The Horsey, who is dead, and whom you buried—did he look anything like me? There is some mistake—some deception in this, Squire Justice—which I must find out."

"Nothing," said Mortimer.

"Nothing," said Montmorenci.

"And yet," said the former, looking at Montmorenci, with a

grave inquisitiveness, "don't you think there is something in this gentleman's chin that looks like poor Tom's?"

"Why, yes—there is a something—a—"

"A sort of split—a—"

"There's no split in my chin, gentlemen," exclaimed Horsey, stroking the misrepresented member—"it's as smooth and round as any chin in company."

"Oh, sir, we don't mean to say that they're alike—but there was a something—"

"Yes, only a something—that is, they were both chins," said Horsey; "for that matter, don't you think that we had other features in common? How about eyes, nose, head, and hair?—pray, gentlemen, oblige me, by answering closely. The question is important, I assure you."

"Well, now, sir, to speak plainly, you are nothing like our poor friend, Tom Horsey. Tom, though an excellent fellow as ever lived, was monstrous ugly; now, if I were asked my opinion, I should say you are a very good-looking sort of person."

"Indeed! I thank you—so Tom Horsey was ugly, was he? Squire Nawls, do me the favor to marry me with Mary here, at once, and while I have some remaining confidence in my own identity. If I talk much longer with these rascals, I shall begin to look upon Tom Horsey as a dead man. I suppose, if she takes me as Tom Horsey, you can have no objection to give me that name till the ceremony's over; and, after that, it's just what you please about the trial. Harry Vernon, don't think I am indifferent to your concerns, my boy; but Mary's here alone with me—a sort of runaway match you see, though we have the mother's consent—and I sha'n't be easy any more than herself, till she has a lawful right to look to me, and I have my lawful rights as well as herself. There may be another Tom Horsey, but I don't believe it, and I know he can't be Tom of Raymond. Those breeches and that coat are mine, though how they came so bloody and holy is past my telling. They were stolen from me in the Big Black swamp, as the newspapers say, by some scoundrel or scoundrels unknown. I don't say you stole 'em, Colonel Mortimer, or you, Major Montmorenci, but I intend to make you show how you got 'em, if there's any justice in Mississippi."

The answer of these worthies was made in high head, and with some show of valor and defiance; but this Horsey, whose regards were chiefly given to Mary Clayton, at this moment, did not seem to heed.

"All in good time, gentlemen," he said, "after the ceremony's over. I invite you to remain till then; though, in your ear, let me tell you, I look on you to be as arrant a pair of liars as ever wagged a Munchausen."

Squire Nawls was better skilled in that department of his business for which Horsey demanded his present aid, than in any other of its requisitions. He saw no reasonable objection to giving the actor a wife as Thomas Horsey, though, in the next moment, he refused his own evidence as such, to prove himself alive. No assertions that he could make, no proofs that he could offer, could impair the positive and sweeping testimony of the two witnesses, or disturb the settled decision which the justice had made before he came; and, in equal fury, the actor and the Alabamian listened to the regrets with which he sought to mollify his resolve, to commit the supposed murderer of Tom Horsey to prison. Before Nawls came to this conclusion, however—for the dull country-justice had been somewhat confounded by the *contretemps* of the dead man's reappearance—he was compelled to retire in private conference with Mr. Augustus Mortimer, a minute's talk with whom was quite enough to set him on his legs.

"Let him be Tom Horsey, or the d—l, it matters nothing to you. You have the evidence of two witnesses that Horsey is dead, and you might go farther and arrest this fellow as an impostor. Though we've no instruction to do so, yet it might be good service to the beagles. Your account is easily squared with the state's attorney—there's the proof on which you committed Vernon to prison, and that's enough. Send him on his way, and let Cane Castle do the rest. I'll engage you never hear of him again from that quarter."

The commitment of Vernon was accordingly made out and delivered to the two emissaries of Saxon, in whose custody he had been left before. They had their instructions as well as Nawls, and they knew if he did not, that the unfortunate youth was reserved for the sacrifice by those whose secret haunts he

was supposed to have invaded as a spy, and whose practices of crime he had been commissioned to arrest and punish.

Meanwhile, the keen, searching mind of Vernon had discovered the true circumstances and secret of those difficulties by which he was involved. While he was under the impression that Horsey had really been murdered, he had little cause to think himself the object of an organized plan of injustice or detention. But the reappearance of the actor, and the revelations which he made during the random dialogue which took place on the examination, together with the fact that his clothes had been stolen, mutilated, and made bloody, were circumstances of sufficient strength to open the eyes of the lawyer to the whole hidden truth.

The conviction that he was singled out as a victim, and that the persons around him were mostly parties to the conspiracy, strongly impressed him with the necessity of being as cautious, yet seeming as little suspicious as possible. A look, and the significant application of his finger to his lips, at a moment when Horsey was about to blurt out in public the whole burden of his discoveries in the swamp, fortunately served to check the torrent of his speech, and to impose upon him the necessity of a caution like that of Vernon, whose composure had seemed in his eyes very much like the most unmanly tameness. When the resolve of the magistrate was made known, Vernon remarked quietly, without any show of anger or suspicion to the justice :—

“I can not blame you, sir—as a lawyer, I should, perhaps, say that you have done nothing but your duty. There is evidently some mistake in this business; for this I know to be Mr. Thomas Horsey from Raymond, who was the only travelling companion I had from that place. Still, these gentlemen, who have given their evidence, may know another of the same name, who has unfortunately been murdered as they state. I do not gainsay their assertions—I only declare my innocence of the crime. Still, sir, you are not to know that, and could only do as you have done. One privilege, however, I must pray to be allowed—that of writing to my friends in Raymond and elsewhere, for the necessary evidence to prove my innocence and the identity of this gentleman. If you will suffer me

to have a brief private conference with my two friends here, Mr. Horsey and Mr. Jamison, I will provide them with directions for seeing to this business, and procuring all the necessary proofs."

This small favor could not well be denied to a man in such an emergency. The calm, respectful deportment of the prisoner, his forbearance to hint or even look any of the suspicions which he really felt, deceived the witnesses as well as the justice. Looking upon it as certain that any evidence which he might procure from Raymond would come too late to affect a trial which was to take place in Cane Castle, and to be as summary as it was certain to be secret—Mr. Augustus Mortimer, to whom Squire Nawls was wont to refer privately in all cases of especial doubt, recommended that his prayer be granted.

"It will be getting these fellows, Jamison and Horsey, out of the way—they might be troublesome—and before they get back with their witnesses, Cane Castle will have done his business beyond any Horsey's undoing. Let 'em talk together."

"And what are we to do for you, Harry Vernon?" demanded Horsey, the moment they reached the little chamber to which the courtesy of the justice had permitted them to retire. "Say the word, and I'm for you,

"To the last gasp, with truth and loyalty."

In less classical style and language the Alabamian made a like offer of his services and sinews.

"You shall say yourselves what you shall do for me, when I tell you how I stand," said Vernon. "I am in the hands of outlaws—the witnesses who swore against me are outlaws, the constables who guard me are outlaws, and the justice who commits me is their creature."

After this startling preliminary, Vernon proceeded to classify those details of facts—those floating circumstances, which, picked up from sundry quarters, formed the groundwork of the faith that was in him.

"And knowing this, you took it so patiently," was the joint exclamation of Horsey and the Alabamian.

"Had my passions been suffered to play as freely as yours, Horsey, Squire Nawls would never have permitted me this

interview. But, stay, I do not hear their footsteps below—they have ceased walking—they are watchful. Not a word now above your breath, gentlemen, for it is now doubly important that we should be secret as the grave. Now, then, hear me. You are both strong men, and, I am sure, as fearless as you are strong. I claim your help in a matter, which, were it your case, should freely command my own. You must help to rescue me from the clutches of these fellows.”

The hands of the two were instantly clasped in frank and manly assurance upon that of the speaker.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

JUDICIOUS USE OF PERQUISSIONS—HOW TO CURRY A SHORT HORSE—ECONOMICAL USE OF GREEN MOSS.

“Come, my good fellow, put thine iron on:—
If fortune be not ours to-day, it is
Because we brave her.”—SHAKSPERE.

THE reader must not, however, suppose that our three friends concluded their conference with this vague determination Vernon was too good a politician, too keen a lawyer, not to see that, left to their own judgments, Dick Jamison might lose the game by his rashness, and Horsey by his frivolity. Their dialogue, which was somewhat further protracted, was carefully given, on the part of the former, to a consideration of the difficulties surrounding him; and to the necessary steps which were to be taken by the two in effecting his rescue.

It does not need that we should report these directions in this place, but leave to time, which usually ripens all projects, even those which events baffle, to bring about its natural results in this case as in all others. It will suffice to say that the manner in which Vernon carried their minds forward, step by step, with his, confirmed in him that tacit superiority which, from the first, neither of them had seemed willing to dispute. If Jamison regarded him as a fine fellow before, he now looked him as a

“mighty wise one;” and the importance and dignity of the new offices, put so suddenly on his hands, seemed to elevate the mind of our actor in his own estimation. He had never been much trusted with matters of importance before; and the idea seemed suddenly, though, perhaps, imperfectly, to open upon him; that, after all, Mr. Aristophanes Bull was not so great a booby, when he denounced tragedies as not “ser’ous things;” certainly, the new task before him of getting Vernon out of his present hobbles, seemed the most serious business of any to which he had ever yet set his hand. Not that Horsey had any scruples or apprehensions. There was no better pluck in Mississippi than that of our amateur. But he had just entered upon a new and exquisitely-delicate condition. He had just formed a new and responsible relationship in life; and when he heard from Vernon that there was no doubt that he should be hurried off that very evening on his way to prison, and that any attempt to rescue him, to be successful, must be made that very night, he could only exclaim with a tribulation in his accents and countenance, which compelled the smile to the lips of his two companions:—

“But, dear me, Harry Vernon, what the deuse am I to do with Mary?”

Vernon had not been inconsiderate on this subject. He had prepared himself to meet this difficulty, and by his counsel, Horsey was persuaded to make application to Squire Nawls for a temporary lodging for his new wife, until he could procure facilities for conveying her home to Raymond. This pretext enabled him to set forth that very evening, and simultaneously with the departure of Vernon under his guard, as if for Lucchesa, where he proposed to find a horse and side-saddle on sale.

Nawls, after some moderate objections, was persuaded by a week’s board paid in advance, and the honeyed arguments of the young husband, to accede to the proposed arrangement; and this matter settled, love consented to waive all further objections to the *quasi* warfare which implored his assistance.

Vernon communicated to both his companions the knowledge which he had acquired from his intimacy with Walter Rawlins and the methodist Badger. To the former he recommended

them in the event of their failure to rescue him. As a sanction for their own proceedings, in a business which promised to involve a great deal that was extra-judicial, he drew from his bosom the envelope which originally contained the blank commissions of the governor, intending to fill the blanks with their names, and thus furnish an authority which would not only assist them in commanding means for acting against the outlaws, but sustain them in their use. He now, for the first time, discovered the robbery that had taken place upon his person—a robbery which he could only ascribe to the practised and adroit hands of Saxon, performed while he was insensible.

A bitter smile passed over the lips of the youth as he made this discovery, and traced, with rapid thought, the connection of event with event, and agent with agent, all co-operating to the same end—his entanglement in present intricacies. But the resolution of Vernon, his sanguine temper, and great self-confidence, conspired to make him still hopeful even against the large odds in favor of the beagle confederacy. Having satisfied himself, to his great relief, that the other packet, which contained the papers of Carter, remained in its original integrity, he determined still to keep it in his possession; as it was now fair to assume that the outlaw, convinced that he had obtained all that was hidden, and that he had found a sufficient clue to the progress of Vernon, would never dream of looking in the same place for a second deposite.

With this conviction, he ceased to feel the loss of the one packet as a very serious evil. That packet involved none of *his* confederates—none of his friends. He alone was singled out as the victim, and, bating the loss of the commissions, which might be perverted to evil use by the outlaw, the utmost extent of his misfortune was already known in his own capture, and threatened imprisonment, if not murder.

Vernon was not insensible to the risk he incurred among the outlaws, as one whose supposed endeavor had been to expose their haunts, detect their doings, and entrap their persons. He felt that, should his two allies fail him at the fortunate moment, his blood would probably be poured out in some lone swamp fastness, while his mangled body would be left uncovered to yield a midnight repast to the gaunt and famished wolves, that

traversed, at that period, the savage and uncultivated hills of the Choctaw purchase.

These were annoying convictions, but Harry Vernon was a man. He spoke none of his apprehensions, and contenting himself with obtaining from Horsey all that he knew, had seen, or heard, while in Cane Castle and with renewing his instructions on all matters which he deemed essential to the successful prosecution of their adventure; he presented himself to the officers, and declared his readiness to go with them. He had done all that it was in the power of man to do at that moment—he had exercised the closest judgment of which his mind was capable, uninfluenced by his own feelings, and the consciousness of danger, of which he could not entirely divest himself; and with a cheerful manner, and a resolute spirit, he left the rest to the courage and conduct of his friends, under the crowning favor of Providence.

These did not desert him. Though neither of them very wise men, or solid counsellors, Horsey and Jamison were yet men of great nerve and composure; strong, as we have shown, of limb, and of undoubted energy and spirit. In their plans and schemes, alone, was it likely that they might fail; and in these respects, the forethought of Vernon had taken every precaution and made every arrangement that might be done by him under existing circumstances. His directions, which contemplated even the particulars of the scuffle with his robber-guardians, the time, the manner, and the probable place, were ample, if not copious. But little more was needed, than that their objects and course should be unsuspected, that their horses should bring them to the season, and their hearts not fail them in the trying moment. Of course, it was the assumption of all parties at the outset, that the strife was to take place with the two outlaws, and those only, who had served as officers of justice from the beginning.

One little difficulty, however, started into sight before they left the presence of the magistrate, and made Vernon tremble, for an instant, in doubt of all his schemes. The sturdy rogues, his captors, having no more to say in respect to himself, were disposed to annoy his friend Jamison, because of his interposition at Lucchesa in cutting the cords which bound their victim

—an act which they had then called a rescue, and which they were still disposed to consider so. They had probably consulted with Nawls on the subject, while Vernon and his comrades were planning his rescue in fact; and, with the sober confidence of veteran knaves, they were resolved to extort a reasonable amount of hush-money from the sturdy Alabamian, while in presence of the justice.

But Jamison's blood, which had been with difficulty restrained by the counsels of Vernon, and the obvious necessity of preserving a large degree of temperance in consideration of his friend's predicament, fired up at the first motion of the rogues. Knowing them, as he now did, to be the most impudent pretenders to official sanction, it was with no small difficulty that he restrained himself from declaring aloud all that he knew, and pouring forth all that he felt. With all his attempts at moderation, his speech was certainly of a character to show but a very limited degree of success in attaining that which he sought.

"Look ye, judge," said he, "these niggers ought to be licked for tying a free white man as they did. I'm the man to lick 'em; let 'em give me the littlest eend of an opportunity. I was a-thinking to bring it afore you myself, because I'm hopeful there's something in the law-books to make 'em sweat for roping a white man, the same as if he was an ingin or a nigger; and, if there ain't, there ought to be, and our *rips* can't put it there a bit too soon. I did take out my bowie-knife, jist as they say, but 'twan't to trouble them; though, Lord bless you! 'twouldn't ha' been so hard a matter neither, to cut 'em up mighty small as they run; but, as I don't altogether like to use a man's weapon upon a chap that shows me nothing but his back, I had no more thought of troubling them with it, than I have of troubling you. I used the knife only to cut loose the rope; and all that was wrong in that business, was in using a weapon that was bigger than was needful, and that made two big men so shameful scary. As for 'resting me for that, squire, why, all that I can say, 'twon't do for them to try it, while I've got the same knife yet, and to the back of it a couple of pair of such bull-mouthed biters as these here *perquissions*. You've seen the new perquission-guns, squire? Well, these pistols are after the same fashion. Here's four of them, and they're a wing

or two quicker in the shot than any race-lightning. One pair of these pistols, and this here knife, belongs to Mr. Vernon there—and I'll take care of them for him till he gets out of jail. I'll drop the rammer down their throats, and you'll see they all have their bellies full of bullets. Now, I'm a peaceable man, squire, for one that's so well prepared for war; but, if I was twice as peaceable, and only half so well off in perquissions, if you was to say the word for these chaps to 'rest me, which I know you can't do as a gentleman and a righteous justice—why, I've only to turn one of these perquissions round about among the company—now here on this one, and now on that—and as there's no taking aim in such a promise'us business, particularly with these mighty quick perquissions, I'm almost afraid to say, squire, how much risk you'd run yourself; though I'm hopeful the bullet's far off that'll ever trouble you. 'Twon't be such a death, squire, as I'd have you die of. As for these—look at 'em, squire, how they dodge—look at 'em, Harry Vernon! Ha! ha! ha! That's jist the way they were scared at Lucchesa—jist the way exactly; they dodged when there was no sort of call upon 'em for it. Lord love you! my lads, if it makes you so squammish when I only p'int the thing at you, it would make you deathly sick, when I come in 'arnest. Squire, let me go home to my business in a civil manner, and don't listen to these rediculous fellows. I've done for Vernon all that I reasonably could; and, by the hocus, I'll be at court when his trial comes on, and if it's the last picayune in the pocket of Dick Jamison, or the last blood in his heart, it shall go to help him out of his troubles. If I hear you say, I'm not to be 'rested about this business, well, I'll be off at once, before night, for Lucchesa. If I'm to be 'rested for cutting loose a free white man, that was tied up wrongfully, say it as soon, and let's see the eend of it at once. P'int your finger now which way you please, and I'm ready, any side. If it's civility, well, I'm all civility—if it's for a close hug, tooth and timber, why there's not a bear in Loosa-Chitta, that'll come to the scratch with rougher arms than Dick Jamison."

This interruption consumed some time; and long speeches, for which the western wanderers are rather famous, were as frequent and as fine, after a fashion, as half of those listened to with

so much patience by the nation—particularly as they have to pay for them—at every session of Congress. Vernon confirmed the simple statement of Jamison, and insisted that all the violence shown on the occasion was no more than was required to separate the bonds of a prisoner, who made no attempt to escape, and professed his willingness to go freely with the officers. True, this was a rescue in legal acceptation, but, under the circumstances, not such a one as would render a prosecution necessary; and Vernon contended for the point the more readily, as he could perceive that the justice desired nothing more than a loophole by which to escape from the necessity of taking steps against a man who had avowed such levelling principles—we had almost written pistols. The pistols, indeed, were the principles; and no effect could have been more ludicrous than that which Jamison produced upon the company, justice and officers, as with a huge pistol in each hand, both of which he cocked, he made their muzzles describe a slow circuit round the apartment, allowing them to rest for a few awkward seconds whenever the line of sight was brought up to the face of one of the opposite faction. The constables dodged with little shame or scruple on such occasions; and the very justice, it is painful to add, though he did not allow his limbs to yield to such a discreditable weakness, could not keep his eyes from winking with singular frequency; and his cheeks—the Alabamian remarked afterward, with a singular show of satisfaction—grew whiter than any clabber that he ever saw or swallowed. The affair was compromised by the justice bestowing a reproof upon the offender, to which he submitted with the indifference of one who rightly estimated its value.

“You’ve got to say it, squire,” said he, “it’s your business, and you can’t help it, and that’s the reason I let it pass and say nothing. But, look you, Squire Nawls, if you wa’n’t a justice, but jist a common man, I’d ha’ been on top of you, and through you, afore you’d ’a half-finished what you’ve been saying. If there’s any one thing in this world that I never could like, it’s when I’m found fault with, jist at a time when I know that I’m doing the very thing that’s right—and then to be spoke to on behalf of such a couple of small-souled sappy-sticks as these—Grim! it makes me all bristles. I feel wolfy in twenty places.

and—dang my buttons, judge, if the thing was to be done over agin, 'twouldn't be the rope only that my knife would slit—if I wouldn't cut a juglar or two, there's no snakes in all Alabam."

It was with a feeling of relief that Nawls and his two emissaries beheld this sturdy democrat take his departure. He set out as if for Lucchesa, accompanied by the amateur, whose parting with his young wife was equally dramatic and characteristic, though still full of genuine feeling. Resolved on having, in this Border chronicle, as little of the lachrymose mood as possible, we refrain from the tears and tenderness shown on the occasion. Our readers of the gentler sex, will please suppose that the omission is ours only;—had they seen the happy couple at the parting moment—had they heard the low but passionate tones and sweet assurances of Horsey, and witnessed the embrace, and seen the face of Mary buried in his bosom, and hearkened to her half-suppressed sobs, which spoke of hope and joy rather than any other emotion—they would have seen that there was no love lacking between the two in this early stage of their matrimonial felicity. Love, however—domestic love in particular—is proverbially a thing of short stages; and the sun which is warm and bright to-day, may be under a very ugly cloud to-morrow;—but this is none of our business—"sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

Vernon saw his friends depart with some anxiety. His own movements, under the guardianship of the tenacious constables, followed soon after. The evening shades were thickening as the party set forth, and grave thoughts become gloomy ones in the twilight hour. Those of our hero were sad ones, at least, and they restrained his natural vivacity of temper, if they did not subdue and dispirit him. He was without arms, without present friends or succor—accused of crime, and at the mercy of criminals. The increasing gloom of the forest, as they advanced upon their way, served to increase the cheerlessness of his situation, and to give an oppressive weight to those doubts which necessarily came with his very hopes and anxieties. Horsey and Jamison were brave—but might they not miss the route taken by the outlaw—might they not fail at the proper moment? Precipitation might be worse than halting apprehension, and the very levity of the former, with the rough and

ready boldness of the latter, might serve to defeat the plans of the most deliberate and thoughtful. To a man of mind, there is nothing so productive of annoying doubts, as the dependence upon mere muscle.

Vernon turned for some sort of relief to his attendants. It was advisable to disarm their watchfulness, and, if possible, to impress them with the conviction that no kind of doubt of their professed character had as yet risen in his mind. To seem to rely upon them, as peace-officers of the country, was the most effectual way to assure them, that he was perfectly resigned to their custody. He, whom they well knew, was guilty of no crime, had nothing to apprehend from the awards of justice; and the mere temporary detention of his person, however troublesome and unpleasant, was not so great an evil as to make it likely that he would incur those risks to avoid it, which would inevitably follow any violent attempt to shake it off. It was no hard matter to engage them in easy conversation; and having paved the way for a familiar chit-chat by some good-natured commonplaces, Vernon proceeded to carry out his design in the way that he calculated would be most likely to effect it. He inquired of them, what they knew of the two men who furnished the evidence against him; and when as he expected they denied all knowledge of the witnesses, he boldly assured them, that they had sworn to utter falsehoods.

"There can be no sort of doubt," he said, "that Mr. Horsey is alive; and that is he, who came in so unexpectedly, when the case was going on. I never knew any other Horsey, save his father, in my life; and I am now convinced, that these two persons have uttered what they know to be untrue; and if they dare come to the trial, I shall convict them of a base conspiracy against my life. It will be easy enough for my friends to bring proof of what I say, and of my innocence. Indeed, as soon as Horsey and Jamison go where I have sent them, I shall come out under habeas corpus. But these scoundrels shall suffer for their malice, if there's law in Mississippi.

"I don't know — may be so," returned one of the constables; "but what should make two men, whom you never saw before swear ag'in the life of another? and then it seems mighty strange, if so be the man that come to be married was the raal

Horsey—it seems mighty strange he should pop in jist at that minute.”

“It was no less strange to me than to you,” replied Vernon; “but the truth is not lessened by the strangeness of the circumstance. That he is the real Horsey, I hope to show, as soon as my friends return from where I’ve sent them. As for the malice of these two witnesses, that I confess to you, is as singular and surprising to me, as it can be to anybody else. I never saw them before—am sure, I never did them any injury and—”

“But why should you call it a conspiracy?”

“It evidently is—here are two men, whom I know nothing of, coming forward most strangely, to swear a crime against me, which I never did commit.”

“Yes—but you see, we are not to know that—Squire Nawls ain’t to know that.”

“True—I don’t blame him. He has done nothing more than he was bound to do; but I am speaking of the two who have sworn to this falsehood—why they should—for what reason—with what hope or object—is a wonder of the strangest sort to me.”

“You’re sure you never had any quarrel with them before?”

“Never saw them in all my life.”

“Well, it is strange, if so be you didn’t kill Horsey and you never had a quarrel with these gentlemen, that they should swear ag’in you. You ain’t made no enemies of anybody? Beca’s these chaps mought be employed by somebody else.”

“Not that I know of. I’ve quarrelled with nobody, and have made no enemies. Stay!—there is one thing!” exclaimed Vernon, with sudden earnestness, correcting himself as he spoke; “now that you put the question, I am reminded of a circumstance which may account for it.”

Here he proceeded to relate the event recorded at an earlier stage of our narrative, in which, while rescuing the traveller, Wilson, he shot the outlaw Weston, who was astride his body.

“This robber might have friends and relatives, who have sought in this manner to avenge him.”

“I don’t think that,” said the rogues with one breath. “It would be more apt to scare his friends off, and if they was

rogues themselves, they'd know better than to come before a justice. Squire Nawls is a mighty keen man when he's a judging—he'd see through a rascal as clear as a whistle, and pick the crooks out of his story in the twink of an eye. No, no! I reckon there's another way to account for it. We don't want to git you to confess, Mr. Varnon, for nobody's bound in law to tell ag'in themselves, but I reckon you did shoot the poor man, though, I s'pose, 'twas by accident, or else you fou't him fairly, and he got the fling."

Vernon re-asseverated his innocence, with the solemn earnestness of one who was really anxious that they should be convinced—so earnestly, indeed, and with such warm simplicity in his manner, that the rogues burst into a good-humored laugh, and one of them, clapped him civilly upon the back while he expressed the hope, that, even if he did kill the man, he should 'pass under the tree without sticking fast to the limb;" or, as it is sometimes expressed, that he should "graze the timbers, without becoming dead wood."

It was just at this moment that a faint whistle reached the ears of our hero. This was the signal agreed upon between himself and his comrades; and circumstances seemed to be particularly favorable to their project. The road was narrow—a mere wagon-track—through which they were passing; night had set fairly in, and though a bright star-light whitened the wide arch of heaven, but a faint effusion of its rays guided our travellers along the dim and shady paths of the forest. To maintain a more certain power over their prisoner—whom, perhaps, because of the disgrace which had followed their first attempts to cord him, they had not bound—they rode close beside him, on either hand. In consequence of the narrowness of the road, this mode of riding brought the horses of the three in absolute contact. The opportunity was too gratefully tempting to Vernon and his heart bounded with the anxiety which he felt during the brief interval between the first and second signal of his allies. That second signal was the *beagle-note*. With a conviction that the robbers who attacked Wilson's carriage, and those who escorted him belonged to the same gang, Vernon had suggested the employment of this imitation sound, with the hope of misleading his guardians. The whistle

which preceded it, was simply meant to indicate to himself the certainty of the subsequent signal being given by his friends. As had been anticipated, an echo from the right hand of the prisoner threw back an answering voice.

"There somebody's dog in the swamp," said one of the rogues carelessly, prefacing with these words, his own excellent imitation of the cry. Again more near and more distinct, came the note of Jamison who proved no unworthy beagle whether in voice or limb. As if in sheer idleness of mood, did the same outlaw again respond to it. The third signal from the Alabamian, which immediately followed, was delivered from a bush almost beside the party; and at the same instant, the two constables drew up their horses, setting each a hand on the rein of Vernon's, to arrest his forward movement.

They naturally looked to a meeting with their comrades; but were surprised in the next moment, as Vernon, yielding his rein entirely, threw an arm round the waist of each of his attendants, and by a sudden exertion of all his strength, drew them together before him upon his steed, until their heads clashed with a stunning concussion. Before they could recover from the shock, draw knife or pistol, or make the smallest effort, a stout hand from below had relieved Vernon from his burdens; and the self-appointed officers of justice found themselves let down with no gentle ministry upon the earth, which, fortunately, being on the skirts of the swamp, and sufficiently pliable, manifested no stubborn resistance to the reception of their persons.

The surprise was as successful as it had been sudden; and while a stout man bestrid each of the prisoners with a heavy and bright bowie blade pointing down and sometimes painfully tickling their throats, Vernon, having secured the three horses, proceeded to divest the rogues of all their weapons. This done, under the direction of Jamison, who had taken care to provide the necessary plough-lines, he bound their arms securely behind them, and thus fastened, they were once more permitted to rise upon a level with their captors.

"A short horse is mighty soon curried," said Jamison, when the business was finished. "I know'd all along, Varnon, that these here chaps hadn't any *perquission* in their guns, and it's now what we're to do with 'em. That's the question. They're

to be lynched I reckon, of course; but whether to lynch 'em here where nobody can get any good from seeing it, or to lynch 'em at Lucchesa where it'll be a warning to all rogues, and gamblers, and abolitionists, that haven't the fear of God in their eyes, and do large business with the devil—that's what I ain't yet determined about."

To lynching, altogether, Vernon absolutely objected; but he did not content himself with uttering moral objections only. With such a man as Jamison, such scruples might not have been so forcible as those which sprung from mere momentary policy.

"We have not time for that," said he in a whisper, and when out of hearing of the captives. "Besides, to go to Lucchesa with these in company, before we have beaten up the whole gang and obtained the proper evidence of their villany, will be only to expose ourselves to discovery, prosecution, and probably punishment by the laws; not to speak of private assassination from the hands of some of the numerous outlaws with whom the whole country seems to be infested. To carry these fellows with us anywhere, would be to encumber ourselves with a burden that would be troublesome, and may be dangerous. No! my counsel is that we bind them to trees in the most secret places in the swamp—there leave them till we can muster a sufficient force to secure them, and to pursue their comrades. We are now in possession of one of their signs, and if we can keep these fellows from communication with the rest, until we can penetrate their hiding-places, we may capture a good many more. I have already told you of friends on the other side of the river. We must join ourselves to them as soon as possible. You will set off to-night. You know all that I can tell you about our friend Rawlins. Horsey and myself, meanwhile, will ride to Lucchesa, where I will see to some business which I have with Mr. Wilson, while he procures a horse and saddle for his wife. With him I will join you to-morrow, and with Rawlins, who, I doubt not, by this time has got a pretty strong party together, we will try what we can to capture the master-spirit of the band. If we take him, we need give ourselves but little trouble about the rest. He is the chain that binds them together—and without him, they fall apart without strength

success, or object. We will rope these scoundrels to trees, where they can not see or communicate with each other, and lest they should employ our signals, it will not be amiss to put a handkerchief in their mouths."

"A handkerchief indeed!" cried Jamison—"that would be a mighty foolish waste, when there's so much fine green moss to be had for the picking."

The economical views of Jamison prevailed, and the mouths of the struggling prisoners were well wadded with green moss in preference to silk bandanas. They were roped to trees in deep and dark recesses of the swamp; but it was not without great reluctance, that Jamison was persuaded to turn away, and forbear the use of a certain bunch of hickories, armed with which, he had prepared himself to requite the rogues for the offensive rebuke under which he had been compelled, after a fashion, to submit in the presence of Mr. Justice Nawls.

Vernon saw that he was dissatisfied with the forbearance of his friends toward the criminals, which he thought as little due to their deserts, as to the cause of justice. They all rode from the place together to the high road, but the Alabamian was very taciturn as they went; his mind seemed to be brooding over some yet undigested purposes. Their parting was evidently hurried on the side of Jamison; and when his two friends had gone from sight on their way to Lucchesa, the matter that troubled him, found expression in words aloud.

"Grim! But I'd sooner sleep in the swamp myself, than let them chaps off without a licking. 'Tain't every day that a rogue gets what he deserves, and 'tain't every month that Dick Jamison cuts a bunch of hickories to throw away. It would be a most monstrous wasting of the wood, to cut a dozen hickories for nothing—besides, it's a mighty great resk to leave the fellows behind, any how: 'spose they get away—then, where's the satisfaction? No, no, that's not my notion—I must write a name on the backs of the critters, so that I may know 'em again, when I see 'em. Then, if they get away, 'twon't be so bad; and one person, that I know of, will be a mighty sight easier in his conscience. I reckon, if I didn't lick 'em, my horse would go mighty rough over the road to-night—I know I shouldn't sit well in the saddle, and my spirits would be a

cursed sight heavier than a fat parson's after a bad collection-Sunday."

This soliloquy was made while the speaker took his way back to the spot which he had just left. We need not add, that he carried out in execution, the sentiments and resolutions which it expressed. The hickories were not wasted; and, according to the usual ideas of border justice, in all parts of the world, the rascals met with their deserts. Satisfied with his administration of the border law, the Alabamian found the movement of his horse and conscience equally easy while he rode upon his way that night. He sat as well in his saddle as ever, and a heavy load, for the time-being, was taken from his heart.

CHAPTER XL.

A FUGITIVE ARRESTED—GRAND BEAGLE HUNT IN PREPARATION.

"Take him to ye,
And, sirrah, be an honest man; ye've reason;
I thank ye, worthy brother: Welcome, child,
Mine own sweet child."—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

THE impatient Saxon, impatient for his revenge, vainly looked out that night for the coming of his followers, to whom Vernon had been given in charge. His arrangements had been so made as to put his plans, seemingly, beyond the reach of disappointment; and, resolved effectually to arrest the further efforts of an individual, whose courage and conduct gave him some reason for apprehension, he had prepared himself and his accessories in the swamp, for the summary and terrible punishment of one, whom they considered a spy, and had destined to those cruel severities which, under their laws, had been decreed for such an offender. The evils which had followed the successful attempt of Richard Hurdis, had mortified the vanity of Saxon—or Clement Foster—and rendered him unforgiving. From the moment when he became convinced that Vernon was an

enemy, he had solemnly sworn to destroy him. His plot for this purpose was a good one—his officers were true—the justice was his willing creature; and, Mr. Augustus Mortimer and Major Marcus Montmorenci, were, he well knew, the most trustworthy witnesses that were ever yet suborned to carry a crooked character straight through the sessions. How then should he account for the delay of his agents in bringing their prisoner to punishment?

“Should it be that d——d actor, Jones—should he have spoiled the matter? Would you had put your knife and bullet through his carcass as well as through his clothes. I fear he will work us evil.”

Such were his muttered doubts, at midnight, to his wily companion, who could say little to relieve them.

“And this proud girl! She, too!—but it can not be very long. She shall submit, if it be only to save the life of her lover. I shall obtain my conquest over her, though, as a condition, I am compelled to forego my vengeance upon him.”

“But his life is forfeit to the law!” said Jones.

“I am the law!” returned the other, haughtily. Then, softening his tones, he added—“but, I am too feverish, Jones, to be just or reasonable now. Forgive me if I speak hastily or harshly. Go you now, and see if there be any tidings of these fellows.”

Meanwhile, Richard Stillyards, the dwarf, was already on his way to the upper ferry, as fast as he could go; and Vernon had reached Lucchesa in safety. His purpose in returning to Lucchesa was to declare himself in private to William Maitland; to reveal his whole connection with Carter; to unfold the favorable terms which he was commissioned to grant, and, finally, to crown the work of peace and good-will, by offering himself in marriage to Virginia, whose own consent, it has been already seen, he was happy to secure at an early period. But the misery of the father at the loss of his child, and the deep feeling of interest which he too had in the matter—which seemed almost to deprive the former of his reason, struck the lover dumb:—

“One stupid moment motionless he stood:”

And then his resolution returned to him as he witnessed the old man's despair.

The natural and nobler feelings of old Maitland's heart recovered all their strength at this moment of his greatest privation. Virginia was the apple of his eye—the solace of his bitter cup—the very light that relieved the otherwise groping darkness which had environed his affections. Bitterly did he now accuse himself of neglect, of cruelty, of crime—of all things, and all thoughts evil—while, as the anguished words poured from his lips, the big, burning tears rolled down his cheeks, on which, the consciousness of evil thoughts and deeds had placed many a premature line and wrinkle. The younger daughter, wild and frightened rather than grieved, as she beheld these ebullitions of a nature which had never shown itself to her under such an aspect before, stood beside the old man, with one hand round his neck, and one resting on his head. He himself sat upon the floor in a state of utter abandonment.

"Cheer up and rouse yourself, sir," exclaimed Vernon, as he looked upon the melancholy spectacle, with a sentiment of pity that became painful—"rouse up, sir, I will give her back to you though I perish!"

"Will you—oh! will you, Mr. Vernon? God bless you if you will!—but I fear—I fear you can not! She's gone—I've looked for her everywhere! It was I that left her for that accursed tavern, and those thrice accursed cards. I am not worthy of my child—my poor child! Oh! where can she be now—in what danger—from what villains! Oh! God, keep me from *that* thought—God in mercy keep her from *that* danger!"

And the miserable father threw himself forward upon the floor—the blood gushing from his nostrils, while his hands tore the scattered white hairs from his venerable head and strewed them around him. The screams of the trembling child mingled with his moans, making a discord which, while it filled the ears of Vernon, did not now so much annoy him. There were some evident fears, not so evidently expressed in the last speech of the father, which made the blood recede from the heart of Vernon, leaving a painful coldness and vacancy behind it.

In what danger was Virginia now? What villain held her in his embraces—scorning her prayers, her tears, her trembling

entreaties—her wild but feeble efforts at release? What brutal violence, sickening to chaste ears, assailed her gasping innocence—and none nigh to save by equal violence from that worse violence that defied the imploring service of every sweet, and soothing, and pure human affection?”

Vernon felt, as these dreadful doubts and apprehensions rushed through his mind, that he too could throw himself in utter abandonment upon the ground, and mingle his groans also with those of the miserable father. But other feelings, strengthened by the blood-giving energies of youth, came to his aid. A fiercer power rose up in his heart, and with accents of recovered might, he repeated his assurance to the old man, that he would rescue and restore his daughter at the peril of his life. While he made this assurance, the pitiable prostration of the father struck him as not less discreditable to manhood, than it was grateful to his paternal love.

Maitland was still a vigorous man—not too old for exertion—not too feeble at such a time, to seek for his child, and strike a desperate blow in her behalf. Besides, men were wanting now to prosecute the enterprise against the robbers in the Chitta-Loosa, with whom Vernon could not fail to connect the outlaw by whom Virginia had been torn away from her dwelling. Circumstances had sufficiently shown the father that her absence arose from an abduction, which the whole tenor of Virginia's life and virtuous deportment conclusively convinced all parties, must have been forcible.

A sudden resolution filled the mind of Vernon. He saw that no better mode remained of arousing the father to his duty, than by awakening other fears in his bosom. This was, indeed, the fitting moment to declare to him the full extent and powers of his own commission. To ordinary minds it might have seemed cruel, while the father so keenly suffered, to vex his spirit with the terrors of discovery and punishment; but the more correct philosophy of Vernon convinced him that the prostration and infirmity of Maitland could receive provocation and stimulus from no other source.

“Mr. Wilson,” said he, “rise—send your daughter to her chamber for awhile, while I unfold to you some business of great importance. I am the bearer of other evil tidings which

you have not heard, but which, sooner or later, must reach your ears. There can be no better season than the present."

The solemnity of these preliminaries had the effect of commanding the attention of the criminal. The daughter was sent from their presence, and the father rose slowly to his chair, with eyes full of a most painful anxiety. Vernon did not delay his communication with any idle formulæ—humanity forbade all such. It will be understood, however, that he omitted nothing which might soften the natural severity of truth, and maintain for himself the proper deportment of a gentleman, and one, too, so closely allied by the tenderest promises to the daughter of the person he addressed.

"You are known to me, sir—you are William Maitland, late cashier of the —— bank."

The miserable old man shrieked in insuppressible terror at the words, while his hands clasped and covered his face. His daughter's fate was in an instant forgotten in his own. The selfishness of his nature preponderated in an instant.

"Spare me, spare me, Mr. Vernon!—for God's sake—for my children's sake—spare me! I am a miserable old man—spare my gray hairs; and I will bless you for ever—they will bless you! Spare me!"

Vernon took his hand kindly.

"Be not alarmed, Mr. Maitland—though I come commissioned to recover this money from you, I yet come as your friend, and from one who has ever been your friend."

"Who? who?" exclaimed the wretched man, with as much eagerness of hope in his face as it had lately expressed of fear. But when the lips of Vernon uttered the name of "Carter," his countenance fell—he sunk back in his chair with a deep groan, and again covered his face with his hands.

"Do not doubt the friendship which has ever served you, even when the noble person whom I have mentioned has been suffering most from your injustice. I know your story, and I know his. I know how much you owe to his friendship, and I know how ill you have repaid it. But I am not sent to reproach you, and well I know, were he himself present, his own reproaches would be spared at such a moment as this. My mission brings you safety, Mr. Maitland, though I come as the messenger of

justice. Hear me with patience, then, while I communicate to you the benevolent designs of my friend—your friend, still, Mr. Maitland—in behalf of yourself and children.”

This communication was soon delivered. The reader is already familiar with its purport. We need not repeat it here. As little necessary would it seem to say, that it was listened to by the undeserving criminal with some such feelings as those of the culprit under judicial sentence, suddenly relieved by an unlooked-for respite from the supreme authority while standing on the very precipice of death.

Vernon did not stop here, though the frequent groans and ejaculations of Maitland, now of remorse and self-reproach, and now of gratitude and exultation, subjected him to frequent interruptions. He at once unveiled to the old man the relation in which he stood to his lovely but lost daughter.

Alas! for the long-diseased heart, and the pampered and pre-ailing sin which possessed it! Even in that hour of his greatest privation, and pain, and humiliation—that hour of his partial relief from the fear of punishment—an hour distinguished alike by the keen sorrows of the father at the loss of the beloved child, and the abased feelings of the felon who suddenly finds himself convicted before man, without escape, and with his mouth choked with the bitter dust of his own degradation—in that very hour, the shape of his old sin once more stood up triumphant and audacious as ever.

The latter part of Vernon’s communication, which declared the nature of the tie which now united his feelings and interests with those of Virginia Maitland, suggested to the miserable old man a new resource for his crime; and he eagerly insinuated proposals to Vernon that, instead of restoring the vast amount of moneys which he had purloined, and which he admitted himself still to have, in great part, in his own possession, to the rightful owners, they should retain it among themselves, and by a timely and far retreat, secure themselves and it from the grasp of all pursuers. The infatuated gambler, whose moral sense, by a tendency as certain as death, had gone down, step by step, with rapid but self-unnoted transitions, to the lowest sink of depravation, vainly imagined that, to a lover, and one so young, the charms of a mistress, and the splendid bribe

which formed her dowry, must prove irresistible temptations. Vernon shrank back with an apparent shudder from the grasp which the eager fingers of Maitland had taken upon his arm; while his eye regarded the stolid criminal with an expression quite as full of sorrow as of scorn.

"Mr. Maitland, for your daughter's sake, I implore you to suffer me to respect her father if I can. Let me hear no more on this subject. I will strive, for my own sake, to forget this most humiliating offer—an offer no less insulting to me than it is degrading to yourself. You have heard me state what were Mr. Carter's propositions. You perceive that he is willing to provide—that he pledges himself to provide amply—for your children, on the restoration of the sums in your possession. Circumstances have favored you, and have spared me the necessity of proceeding harshly. I count myself as singularly fortunate as yourself in being the messenger of such benevolent intentions on the part of one upon whom you have no claims of kindness. Carter, indeed, is a ruined man. Having carried out his designs, and secured your children in the sums specified, he will have no more left him than will barely suffice to make his friend Gamage secure against all losses. Let me know at once what is your resolution; for we have little time to lose. The safety of one who is now no less dear to me than to you, requires our instant pursuit."

Doubly humbled, though, perhaps, not yet contrite, Maitland acceded to all the requisitions of the youth, and, with a hurried consent, he would have dismissed the subject, while he proceeded to bustle forward to command the horses. But Vernon was one of those men who do their work thoroughly.

"Mr. Maitland," said he, "this matter must be settled to-night, and the money delivered. I have my credentials ready, and will prepare your guarantee, while you are getting things in readiness. If you are resolved to go with me in pursuit of Virginia, it will be your better course to order your barouche, and take Julia with us. The night is pleasant, and she can be wrapped up carefully. It will be better than to leave her here, in the care of servants only, and in a place which has already proved itself to be so very insecure. You can have no reason to dread returning now, and at Mr. Badger's she will be in per-

fect safety, while we traverse the swamp in search of her sister. I know no better course either for safety or propriety."

Briefly, Vernon had his own way in all respects. His firmness, mingled with that becoming deference of manner which youth always owes to age, even when it is criminal and debased, cowed the spirit, and commanded the respect of Maitland. The money was restored, and in one hour more the cottage was deserted. The poor Julia, trembling and wondering, confused at all things, and almost totally inapprehensive of any, was wrapped away in the barouche, with her father beside her, sad, ashamed, and silent; while Vernon, mounted on horseback, and once more armed, after a long interval, with the weapons of which the sturdy Alabamian had taken such excellent charge during his arrest and sickness—with spirits unconsciously heightened by the sense of liberty and strength—rode alongside, and strove to cheer the miserable father, and the innocent and unconscious child. Though his anxieties and apprehensions were in no respects lessened in regard to the lost Virginia, yet the conviction that he was now able to strike in her behalf, made him sanguine with hope, and rendered him elastic in movement. He suffered no unnecessary delays to restrain his progress, and by his voice and example, he urged the driver of the vehicle to a corresponding action with his own sinewy steed.

The reader, if he be not more dull—

"than the fat weed

That hugs itself at ease at Lethe's wharf,"

will be pleased to spare us some unnecessary narration, and readily imagine a few things in our story which are quite as easy to conceive as to write. He will take it for granted that the progress of our night travellers was uninterrupted—and that a union was safely effected the next morning, at a tolerably early hour, between themselves and their friends Jamison and Horsey. He will further learn that, shortly after the meeting of these with Vernon, they were joined by Walter Rawlins and Master Edward Mabry. The eyes of the latter, which the adroit fists of Horsey had sealed up for a season, were now in tolerably good condition—they wore less of the plethoric form and rain-

bow aspect, than they did a week past; but, though restored, they did not seem to regard the actor with any more favor than before. Some mutual efforts were made by Rawlins and Vernon to bring the parties to friendly offices; but they were partly ineffectual. Still, there was no open show of hostility between them. Horsey, certainly, preserved none. He was a generous fellow at heart; and would have scorned to have fostered any feeling of malice at an enemy. Besides, he had been successful, and as those always laugh who win, his good humor was in nowise diminished, because the hand which he offered with frankness to his foe was taken with reluctance. He disarmed the active rancor of Mabry, by making some concessions—without which it might have been that the operations of the party would have been exposed to conflicting feelings and divided counsels—which he was neither bound by courtesy, nor expected by his opponent to make.

As for Rawlins, his delight at seeing Vernon was exasperating. He hugged him to his breast with what seemed to the latter quite a superfluous degree of affection, and in the same breath, though in a whisper, told him that Rachel had at length yielded to his persuasions, and had consented to name the day.

Another matter of far more gratifying import to Vernon at this moment, was the information which he received of a new ally in the person of Stillyards, the dwarf. That elegant young person, elated with the boon with which Florence Marbois had consented to reward his industry in promoting her purposes of vengeance, had made his appearance at the door of Rawlins, a little after daylight that very morning; and his communications had quickened the preparations of the latter for the pursuit of that enterprise to which the counsels of Vernon had before impelled him.

He had not been idle, it may be said here, during the interval which had passed. He had secured the co-operation of nearly twenty men—all stout fellows—good men and true—whom the blast of a horn would bring together in half an hour, from a circuit of five miles.

The revelations of Stillyards had much more effect upon Vernon than they could possibly have had upon Rawlins. The abduction of Virginia Maitland was now known with certainty;

and it was with no less certainty that he knew where she was hidden by Saxon. It was no small addition to his desire for immediate enterprise, when he found that her abductor, and the consummate chief of the Beagles of the Border, were one and the same person. These discoveries he kept from the father. He had come to the conclusion that William Maitland could be of little service in the adventure—and he counselled him to proceed at once with Julia to the security of Zion's Hill. He particularly cautioned him against suffering his own near neighborhood to be known to the venerable and dogmatical head of the establishment; still less to suffer it to be suspected that any enterprise was on foot, by which to rout the outlaws. To render the old man more cautious in this and every other respect, the doubtful character of young Badger was revealed to him, and the danger fully shown of any premature development of a project which could only be successful through perfect secrecy. Having sent the unhappy and criminal father upon his way, Vernon proceeded to the examination of Still-yards, whom Rawlins had kept under close watch in the neighboring wood.

CHAPTER XLI.

CAMPAIGN BEGINS—THE PIOUS ELDER—THE PICAROON SON
—THE PEERLESS MAIDEN.

“She scorn’d us strangely,
All we could do, or durst do; threatened us
With such a noble anger, and so governed
With such a fiery spirit.” — BONDUCA.

THOUGH naturally impatient to commence the war against his enemies and rescue the fair Virginia from her abductors, Vernon was too thoughtful and deliberate of character to defeat his own objects by any premature or precipitate attempts. He retired as soon as possible into the cover of the forests, and from sight of any but his own comrades, after sending Maitland on his way to Zion’s Hill. Here he closely examined the dwarf Stillyards; and this done, he despatched Jamison with two others for the purpose of bringing in, and more effectually securing the persons of the two rogues, whom we left fastened in the swamp the night before. There were two other rogues to be secured, of whose neighborhood he was now first informed by the dwarf.

These were fellows, who, in the “Beagle” dialect, went by the significant name of “smellers.” They were, in fact, advanced sentinels, the keepers of outposts, watching the highways leading to the swamp fastnesses, and conveying the earliest tidings of the approach of any uncongenial or hostile influences. To divert these watchers from their posts, Stillyards, whom they knew, was immediately sent forward, as if with instructions from their captain. Being in possession of all the first signs of the band, there could be little or no difficulty in deceiving them by means of his agency; and not altogether prepared to rely wholly upon a rogue, even in the hour of his

first conversion, Vernon sent Rawlins, secretly, with two others — all excellent woodmen — to follow the dwarf, and correct his treachery, should he happen to prove faithless to his trust.

But his precautions, though proper, proved unnecessary. Stillyards was now the sworn enemy of the outlaw chief on his own account, even if he were not bound as the agent of Florence Marbois. The humiliating indignity to which his ears had been subjected by the fingers of Saxon had turned all the sweet milk of his nature into gall and bitterness; and he was now prepared, without fee or reward, to prove to his superior the extent of that malignity, which, in the base spirit, never forgives a wrong, and in the weakly, vain heart never forgets a slight. The wish to prove his capacity for vengeance, to him who was to be the object of it, had kept the deformed absolutely sleepless; and it was with the keenest and most suspicious impatience that he heard the resolution of Vernoir to make no movement, until night, against the outlaws of Cane Castle.

This resolution was productive of surprise to other minds than his. Rawlins himself wondered, that, with a body of stout, fearless men, which, at mid-day, exceeded in numbers the entire force of the beagles known to be then within their camp, he should forbear instantly proceeding toward their prey. But the determination of the leader was a judicious one; and when explained to the few comrades whom he trusted with his plan, its evident policy overcame all their scruples and disarmed their doubts.

It was not till the evening shadows had fallen that their movements were begun. Before this time, however, the party which had been despatched for the two prisoners had returned with their charge; while, with equal success, the dwarf Stillyards, had beguiled the "Smellers" from their station into the very hands of the attacking party. Before they knew where they were, they encountered a dozen armed men in front, while the three who had been despatched to follow Stillyards, seasonably arriving behind, cut off all chance of retreat.

The four were despatched under an equal party toward Zion's Hill, in time to reach it a few hours after dark. They conveyed a request from Vernon to the venerable elder of that establish-

ment, that they might be suffered to remain under guard at his retreat, until the return of the party next day. Having several miles the start of the methodist, it was no longer a cause of fear that their plans might be defeated either by the perverse self-esteem and dogmatism of the father, or the treachery of the son; of whom, by the way, Rawlins had meanwhile gathered such knowledge from Rachel Morrison, as confirmed all his previous suspicions.

These minor matters attended to, Vernon set his party in motion as soon as the darkness was sufficient to conceal their movements. But instead of taking his way down, he advanced up the river, and in a course directly opposite to that where Cane Castle lay. Two miles above the place where he had been concealed through the day, was the ferry which he had that morning crossed, and, while crossing, had scanned curiously, yet in silence, the place where the boat was fastened, and as much of the scene and circumstances around him as he deemed effectual to his purposes.

Having reached the neighborhood, he ordered his party to halt in the woods, while, alighting from their horses, Rawlins, Jamison, and himself, went forward to reconnoitre. Finding the coast clear, they loosened the ferry-boat from its fasts. This boat a huge flat, suited to the transportation of wagons of the largest dimensions across the river—soon received the party without their horses. These were sent to await them, under the charge of a couple of the troop, to a spot on the same side of the river seven miles below, which was described to be directly opposite to that where the outlaws held their abode. Under the guidance of Rawlins, who knew the river, and Still-yards, to whom the upper shore was sufficiently familiar, the flat was suffered noiselessly to fall down with the current; the only toil of the party being to push her off when she touched the shore, and keep her free from the snags and sawyers—a task not so easy to execute in the imperfect starlight, which guided them in their progress.

But they experienced fewer difficulties than Vernon had anticipated, and arrived at the spot already known to the reader by the fishing adventure of Horsey, in perfect secrecy and silence. The flat was now run up, and suffered to rest upon

the oozy plane which skirted the river and lay between it and Cane Castle; and, through this bog, the most toilsome and unpleasant part of their journey, the little troop were compelled to scramble—the silence imposed upon Horsey, at this juncture, being the worst portion of the business to that worthy amateur. The restraint he found excessively irksome, at a moment and in a place, which reminded him of some of his strangest experience, and of events which had been sufficiently exciting to himself to make him sure of the dramatic effect which they must produce in the minds and estimation of all others. It did not alter the case very materially that he had discoursed over his experience to several of his present comrades more than once already. All day he had exercised his tongue in the reminiscences, always pleasant when past, of peril and annoyance: still, some had not heard—and then, the minutiae!

“It is in the little touches, my dear fellow,” he said to Vernon, in a whisper—“the nice and seemingly unimportant features of a subject, that the whole character speaks out. A look, a nod, a wink, or the slightest gesture in the proper place, makes all the difference in the world—makes eloquent the commonest passages of the poet, which the ordinary reader would slur over in impatience.”

“Be a man now, not an actor, Horsey. Everything in season,” was the stern response of Vernon, in a like whisper. “He is neither man nor actor who can not keep his tongue, when the part actually calls for silence.”

“You’re right in that, by the ghost of Solomon, Harry Monmouth;” and, as the actor contented himself with this reply, he sunk back, murmuring from one of his favorites:—

“This is no world

To play with mamnets, and to tilt with lips:

We must have bloody noses, and cracked crowns,

And pass them current too:—”

A reflection, we may add, that only distressed him as he thought how awkward he should look, appearing a second time with a bloody nose before Mary Clayton, otherwise Mrs. Horsey.

He was beguiled from his annoyances, however, by finding that the next person at his side was Master Edward Mabry, his

late rival. This discovery led him to some vague musings about coincidences, from which he was only aroused by the summons, which sent him forward with three others, for the capture of his quondam companion, Jones; a summons which enlivened and gratified him greatly, as it seemed to imply some retributive agency in Providence, which thus left open the door to an atonement for all the indignities of Mr. Aristophanes Bull, and the ruin of his Hamlet.

He followed Rawlins, to whom Stillyards had given particular directions for finding the sleeping-place of that sturdy outlaw, while five others, equally well instructed, were commissioned for the capture of the rest of the gang. Vernon, reserving to himself the dwarf Stillyards only, took his way with a cautious step, but a bounding heart, toward the squatter's hovel, where he had been told by his companion that the maiden was imprisoned. His command to the rest of his party was, that the followers of Saxon should be surprised and captured;—a more sudden, if not more severe doom he purposed for the outlaw himself. For him the sudden shot or stroke was designed, as from him was anticipated the most reckless and resolute resistance.

Meanwhile, the commotion at Zion's Hill, inspired by the astounding intelligence brought by those who escorted the captured outlaws, was such as might have been expected from the vexed self-esteem of the venerable veteran. The attempt of Vernon and Rawlins to effect so important a business without his agency, was a source of equal surprise and indignation. That Rawlins should be so presumptuous, was monstrous in the extreme; and what made it seem more so, was the fact, that, in all his schemes and counsels, submitted from time to time to the latter, after the departure of Vernon, it seemed to the dictatorial elder, that the woodman was uncommonly obtuse and wretchedly deficient in honorable enterprise. His son, Gideon, on the contrary, by the boldness of his expressions, and the warmth of valor which he displayed whenever the capture of the "Beagles" was the subject, had greatly commended himself to the old man's heart. He even began to think, after making due comparisons between the two on this subject, that it would be only a legitimate right which he had, as the guardian of Rachel Morrison,

and a becoming exercise of his wisdom, to urge his wishes upon her that she should marry a youth of so much more promise, and discard one of whom so few expectations could be formed. He had forborne any attempt hitherto, to bias her affections; but to one who assumed to himself so large a portion of the allotted sagacity of mankind, it began to seem perfectly proper and praiseworthy to employ it in his own way, for the use of one, who still toiled in a sort of moral darkness and among the shadows of ignorance. His first attempts at this sort of jurisdiction, were, however, moderate enough. He began by reproaches of Rawlins for his indirection and infirmity of purpose, and a recommendation, only implied, however, of the worthy and valiant Gideon.

“What Walter Rawlins can mean,” he remarked to Rachel, one morning shortly after the woodman had taken his departure, “by keeping his hands from the good work, I do not understand. Surely he lacks not heart—he hath courage for strife. There hath been no shrinking, hitherto, on his part, in the hour of danger.”

“He has courage, believe me,” was the reply of Rachel, with the natural and unrestrained warmth of one who loves without doubt or qualification. “There is no man of more courage on the river.”

“It would please me to think so, Rachel—nay, I have thought so, but a short while since; yet, to say truth, I have my misgivings. Why is he backward to stir up the people when I bid him? Why, when the occasion is so pressing—when evil men gather with deadly weapons in their hands, and deadly malice in their hearts, as I may say it, around the holy places of the Lord; and the innocent traveller is waylaid for his spoil; and they fear not to smite the unoffending, and the unprepared, and the innocent—why doth he keep himself aloof at such a time—how may he justify himself for such slackness of spirit? Were he feeble of limb, and slight of person, it were, perhaps, to be forgiven him that he is backward; but he hath strength beyond that of ordinary men, and with a fitting strength of heart, there would seem to be no justification for this lukewarmness. Truly, Rachel, it humbleth me much—this falling off in our friend.”

"There is no falling off, dear uncle, believe me. I will answer for Walter, that, when the fitting time shall arrive, he will be ready, and among the first."

"When the fitting time shall arrive!" was the exclamation of the elder. "Have I not said to thee and to him, already, that now is the time and the season? Now! now! Can there be a better hour than the first for the good performances of a man, and those which are so needful for human safety? He hath heard my thought more than once already, in behalf of this necessity."

"But, if he thinks otherwise," was the imprudent reply of the maiden—her anxiety for the justification of her lover, making her forgetful of the mortal stab which such a suggestion must give to the old gentleman's conceit of heart. His hands and eyes were uplifted in unmitigated astonishment.

"Ha! it is so, then, even as I expected. He hath better assurances of wisdom and the truth than older men—nay, than all men around! for all men seem to hold it needful that the outlaw should be arrested, out of hand, in his deeds of evil. He thinks otherwise, doth he? He will tell us when it is the fitting season, will he? He is good and wise, but it is unfortunate that we must do without him. We must content ourselves with the strength we have, and only pray to the Lord that it may be equal to the work before us—that we may go forward without faintness of heart or slackness of spirit, and that success may be vouchsafed to us, not because of the strength which we have, but the will for the performance!"

"Oh, my uncle, speak not thus harshly—think not thus unkindly of Walter;" responded the maiden, now fully awake to her indiscretion as she listened to this outpouring of the morbid vanity of age. "You do Walter injustice; I'm sure you do; and he'll be ready to go with the rest, as soon as ever they're ready. He may think it too soon, but I'm sure, when you once set the example, and name the day, he'll be among the first to turn out at your summons."

A reply no less bitter than the former answered this additional speech of Rachel; and was followed up by a sneering comment of Master Gideon Badger, who made his appearance while the controversy was in progress. He muttered some

general remark about the not unfrequent incompetency of the soul to the frame which enclosed it; and concluded with assuring his father that mere bulk or even numbers were not so necessary as spirit and resolution for the adventure which they had in view.

"And the sanction of God, my son," said the now approving father.

The eye of Rachel Morrison turned upon the hypocritical Gideon, with an expression of fiery scorn which he shrunk to encounter. Her heart swelled within her with a feeling of indignant resistance as she replied, addressing herself only to the son:—

"I can answer equally for the spirit and frame of Walter Rawlins, Gideon Badger, and will warn you in season how you provoke either."

"Rachel Morrison!" exclaimed the old man sternly — "would you threaten Gideon with the violence of a stranger?"

"A stranger, uncle—Walter Rawlins a stranger!—Has it then come to this?—But if he is a stranger to you, sir, as, indeed, he seems to be, from the manner in which you speak and think of him, he is yet no stranger to me. I can answer equally for his strength and courage. As for threatening Gideon with them, I had no such thought—but I thought it prudent to warn him against offending either. Walter is patient enough, but he is young, and he is human; and when human passions are treated with scorn, they are very apt to rise in resentment. I respect the courage of Walter sufficiently to make me think it would not be safe for Gideon to doubt it in his hearing."

"In a good cause, and with God's blessing," said the devout young man, "I have little fear of him or of any other person."

"And with such principles, Gideon, my son, you need have no fear. The gates of hell shall not prevail against him who goes forth armed by God's favor, and in the prosecution of the just war of truth. It is even such a war as this, which Walter Rawlins thinks it not yet a seasonable time to begin; but, as you have already said, we need not numbers in a righteous cause. God will provide—God will strengthen—God will see that numbers even shall not be wanting, in the hour when the

banner is to be raised and the blows are to be struck; and if I have a sorrow because of the absence of Walter Rawlins from this conflict, it is because of his own great loss therefrom."

"He will not be absent!" exclaimed Rachel Morrison—"I know he will go in search of these robbers, when the time comes, so far ahead of some others, that even their eyes will not dare to follow him."

This sarcasm was felt by Gideon, but passed the old man without attracting his notice; an escape which no doubt saved the damsel a lecture on presumption of heart, and pride of opinion, and some dozen more of the vital sins of ignorance and youth.

The arrival of the captured outlaws, and the message from Rawlins—events which took place only two days after this dialogue—while they completely justified the warm confidence of the maiden in the manhood of her lover, as completely confounded the stern old methodist, and baffled all his estimates of character. Not that he thought any better of Walter Rawlins than before. If forced to believe him brave and ready now, he was at least thoroughly vexed with the audacity that dared to undertake a business so important without his co-operation. Nay—not only without his co-operation, but actually, with a studious reservation from him of a task in which his own threatened performances were to be the most conspicuous of all human adventures. His self-complacency did not permit him to imagine, for a single instant, the true reason why he should be kept from the knowledge of a scheme, the object of which he had as sincerely and notoriously at heart, as anybody else, and it would have been very difficult to persuade him—the fact is not easy of belief—that a dogmatical old man is of all others the greatest obstacle to the progress of any business, where young men are to be the performers. That Badger would have rejected every plan but his own, for the capture of the robbers, and spoiled any that might be undertaken, the shrewd sense of Vernon perceived in the first hour of their acquaintance; and the doubts which were entertained of the fidelity of the son, naturally combined to strengthen his objections to any participation of the father in the business. His views of the subject have been already given to the reader.

The exultation of Rachel Morrison may be imagined, when these proofs of the courage of her Walter were produced—an exultation which spoke in tearful eyes, and a trembling and bounding heart. Old Badger, as one of the quorum, and one learned in the law—in all laws—clothed in official authority, and no less delighted with, than conscious of, the power which it conferred, was—however angry with the captors—not unwilling to take into custody the captive outlaws. He secured them under good locks and keys, having first taken the precaution, with the assistance of the detachment under whose guard they came, of roping them to some very heavy articles of furniture. The two *soi-disant* constables were bound, with upward-looking eyes, on the flats of their backs, *tête-à-tête*, to a dresser of prolonged dimensions, but not so long, as, when the rogues were stretched upon it, to admit of a support to their legs, which were, in consequence, suffered to dangle from it, only in partial possession of their wonted liberty. They could kick the wall or each other, at either end of the board, but to these limited exercises they were unequivocally restrained. If the other two were not equally well-cared for, it was their misfortune—they were certainly equally well-fastened. It needs not that we should describe the particular privileges of their situation. Two of the guard were reserved to keep watch over them until the proper officers of the law could be got in requisition, while the other two were dismissed, at their own request, that they might rejoin the attacking party that night, and before the descent was made upon the camp of the outlaws.

After dismissing them, which he did in no very ceremonious or friendly manner, old Badger was suddenly seized with the conviction that he should have gone himself. His *amour propre* was interested to lead in an expedition for which his past acquaintance with the wars, and his present connection with “the peace,” seemed equally to constitute a peculiar justification of his claim. Besides, had he not been beating up recruits for this very expedition? Were not some of them in the neighborhood—could they not be easily mustered? There was Gideon and himself—Joe Tompkins, the hired ploughboy, Nicodemus Root, the schoolmaster, who, though a Yankee, was able to ride and shoot, and had done execution more than once at pigeon-dis-

tance. A timely use of the six or seven hours remaining between that and daylight, would enable him easily to muster up some half a score; and with these the veteran was not unwilling, in a fair day, and after due preliminaries of prayer and fasting, to face all the outlaws between the Alabama and Arkansas. From the guard that brought in the prisoners, he had been led to believe that the party of Vernon would not commence the march before dawn; and as he had no thought of the use which might be made of the ferry-boat in such an expedition, he took it for granted that hard riding would bring him to the post of danger in season for all its honors. This new course of thought led to instant preparations, which need to be adverted to only. They do not affect our expedition at this moment.

But when his plans had to be carried out, the venerable elder discovered that one of his chief agents was reported missing. This was his own son, the worthy Gideon, who was no less confounded than his father at the developments of the night. If the old man was vexed and mortified, Gideon was terrified. The danger was at his very door. The rascals who were taken knew him as a confederate, and in the very presence of the old man exhibited those secret signs of intelligence which made the profligate youth's heart quake within him, though he sufficiently preserved his equilibrium to return them. The keen eyes of Rachel Morrison beheld his consternation, and her piercing and suspicious glance did not fail to perceive that there was some communion even then going on between the parties.

Gideon, with every additional moment of reflection, fancied the danger to be increasing. He knew that the outlaws looked to him for assistance; nay, looked to him to liberate them;—and also remembered some of the painful conditions which were coupled with his association with the beagles. He was sworn to convey the tidings of danger to his comrades in the swamp. Their arrest almost necessarily led to his own. The discovery of their secrets involved his safety; and what security could he have against the revelations of frightened rogues at the foot of the gallows? He was divided between conflicting fears and desires. It was important to rescue the outlaws already in custody—it was equally, if not more important, to counsel those in the swamp of their approaching danger.

A few moments' reflection determined him to address himself exclusively to the latter object. The danger of the prisoners was not immediate. They were yet to be committed for trial, and a considerable stretch of time lay between the present and the period assigned for the county court sessions. If the beagles in the swamp continued free, it would be no very difficult matter to rescue the prisoners at some more favorable moment; and the only evil would be their temporary detention in confinement. He was well assured that such hardy rogues would never make their confessions a moment sooner than was necessary.

That the beagles in the swamp were prepared for their enemies was very probable, and yet a promptness, spirit, and vigilance, such as had already been shown by the assailing party, rendered important every measure of precaution, and demanded the instant activity of every member of the fraternity. Vernon and Rawlins were obviously men to be feared, and the reader has already seen that Gideon Badger was one of those men who are soonest to "despair their charm." He wanted "the natural hue of courage," and his fears on the present occasion, even exaggerated the danger, pressing as it really was. To give a sign to the outlaws in custody, significant of his resolution to serve them, and to slip from the apartment unobserved, even before his father had yet dismissed the two men of Rawlins's party who had brought in the prisoners, were the first steps of Gideon after he had concluded upon his course. The venerable methodist, with eyes shut and hands uplifted, was too busy delivering a searching sermon to the prisoners and their captors, alike, to observe the movements of the son. But they were seen by the keen eyes of the damsel, who already knew enough of the truth to comprehend the condition of Gideon's mind, and to anticipate his probable course. She followed him silently from the apartment, and traced his steps to the foot of the garden. She came up with him as he was about to cross the fence, and called him instantly by name.

"Gideon!—Gideon Badger!"

How shrunk his heart in terror at the sound—the sound of his own name uttered by the lips of a woman! But at that moment he knew not whose lips uttered it, and it was a sound

of terror. His apprehensions had rendered his senses dull to discriminate, however acute in the appreciation of all sights and accents. The summons seemed full of terror, and it was not till she approached, and he turned full upon her, that he felt relieved.

"Gideon," she said, "go not if you would be safe. I warn you, stay where you are—you are in danger if you leave Zion's Hill."

"In danger, Rachel!—in danger, my pretty cousin!" he replied, with some show of recovered impudence, if not courage, in his manner—"why, what should be the danger that I must apprehend, unless it be that to which I have been so long exposed? My danger is from you, Rachel—you only!"

He would have taken her hand as he spoke, with an air of excessive familiarity, but she repulsed him and drew back at his approach, with a manner, the evident aversion of which brought a burning flush upon his cheek.

"This is no time," she said coldly, "for these follies; and least of all is it a season for you to indulge in them. Hear me, Gideon; I am in possession of your secrets—I can guess where, even now, you would bend your steps. You go to warn the robbers in the swamp of the danger that awaits them."

"Ha!" It was all he spoke, and his teeth almost chattered in the utterance.

"Yes—it is known to me—the dreadful tie that binds you to these miserable men. I have heard you in speech with their leader, and others of the band. They are in danger—you can not show them this, without involving yourself in their danger, and it is beyond your power to save them. Stay where you are—or, if you leave Zion's Hill, let me counsel you to take a course far different from that you intend to-night. Fly to the eastward; I will keep your secret, and do my best to get the means for you from my uncle."

"Rachel, you must really care for me. This friendly revelation—this pursuit of me—this interest in my fortunes—this care for my safety, sufficiently prove it. Be mine, dear Rachel, and I will do as you counsel—I will fly from this confederacy—I will go with you where you please."

"This is only trifling, Gideon—you should know me better I have already told you that I am pledged to another."

"But you do not love him—you can not—nay—can I doubt your feeling of preference for me after this proof? It is midnight—the darkness of the night and forest are around us—yet you seek me to counsel me against danger—you—"

"God help you to wiser thoughts, Gideon. Is it not enough that you are the only child of that uncle who has been a father to me? Is this not sufficient reason why I should seek to keep you from danger, and him from misery?"

"I must believe there is yet another and a better reason. I am sure, Rachel, that we can be happy together."

"Never! never!" she exclaimed, with impetuous energy, as, provoked by the insolent self-complaisance of his tone and manner, she wrested from him the hand which he had partially taken in his grasp. "Flatter yourself with no such idle fancies, Gideon Badger. Happiness with you is impossible. Sooner shall the heavy sod lie upon my bosom, and I not feel it, than I yield myself up to the hope, or to the chance of finding happiness in any closer connection with you than now! Even now, I pain to look upon you as I must daily, and see you as I do, and know you as you are!"

"Rachel Morrison, you have determined your own fate. You know too much for your safety and for mine. My security henceforward must be in securing you. You have been at some pains to pry into my secrets—to follow me here and there, and become a party to those concerns in which you were required to take no part. This proves that you have sufficient interest in my fortunes to justify me in forcing a portion of them upon you. You are right; I am about to join the beagles in the swamp. It is useless now to deny to you that I am one of them. You must go with me. You must be mine from this instant! Your own lips have sealed your doom! Your man, Rawlins, is not here to save you now!"

He advanced upon her as he spoke. She retreated a pace and spoke with tones of coolness and deliberation—tones which trembled only from the aroused energies of her spirit.

"You are mistaken, Gideon Badger. I am prepared for this. It is you that have sealed your doom, or will seal it, if you ad-

vance another step toward me! If the man, Walter Rawlins—he is a man, Gideon Badger!—if he be not here to save me, he has left me that with which I shall save myself! One of his pistols is now in my hand—loaded by him, and left at my request—with a fearful conviction that it might be necessary at some such moment as the present! Your threats have thus prepared me; I have learned the use of the weapon; and, as I hope still to maintain the whiteness of my soul to the last, I am resolved to use it against yourself, sooner than suffer you to sully the purity of mine. You know me well enough, Gideon Badger, to know that I will as solemnly execute the resolution which I have so solemnly made! Now, approach me with violence, if you dare!"

CHAPTER XLII.

THE WOLF AT BAY—THE APE ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE
TIGER—A COUP-DE-THEATRE, A LA SIDDONS.

"Such a life,
Methinks, had metal in it to survive
An age of men."—GEORGE CHAPMAN.

THE solemn accents, the deliberate, resolved tone of the maiden, not less than the energetic language which she used, would have impressed a much bolder person than Gideon Badger with the danger of trifling with such a spirit. It was evident that all was serious and composed earnestness in her mind; and her words derived no emphasis, or very little, from the exhibition of the pistol, and the click of the lock as it distinctly sounded under her fingers. To the dastard soul of Gideon Badger it struck a sentiment of fear, which at once disarmed him of his insolence and arrested his approach. But a moment before he had persuaded himself that he should be able to carry her in safety to the swamp. He had no sort of doubt that the beagles would escape the pursuit of Rawlins's party, even if they remained uncounselled by himself; for, well apprized of

the numberless ramifications and resources of the fraternity, he did not fear but they would be advised of the approach of the enemy by at least a dozen out-sentries. How easy to find shelter with them for Rachel Morrison; and there, secure from pursuit, and having her entirely in his power and at his mercy, what should hinder the consummation of any, even of his worst purposes?

Such was the precious scheme which his mind conceived from the first moment that night when Rachel appeared upon the scene. Such was the scheme which her masculine resolution and her foresight so easily defeated. Gideon Badger was not calculated to be a magnificent villain. He was a petty rascal only. In a city like New York he would have made an excellent auction-dealer—one of those cunning gentry that sell baubles by the lot, and bluster when you refuse to keep your hasty purchases. Still, base as was his nature, he felt the meanness of his present position. Incapable of pressing his villany to the utmost, he would have ascribed his abortive attempt to merriment only. With a laugh, which did not altogether disguise the tremulous tone of his voice, he said:—

“Why, Rachel, you seem to think that I was serious—at least, you are grown serious yourself. And so you actually go armed? That, of all things, is the strangest! Why should you go armed? What would you do with a loaded pistol, I should like to know?”

“Use it for my protection, Gideon, if I found any one seriously bent to assail me,” was the cool reply.

“But you could not have supposed that I would do such a thing, Rachel?”

“I do!—indeed, I know that you would, if you dared! It is well for both of us, Gideon, that you are not quite so valiant as you are wicked!”

“You speak plainly, Rachel,” was the hoarse reply.

“It is best,” answered the maiden; “it is for your safety that I have spoken thus plainly. Hear me, Gideon, while I speak more plainly yet. To save you from a great peril, I have ventured into these woods at this hour of the night, in spite of the fears and scruples which are so natural to my sex—”

“And of which your own share seems unaccountably small,” was the sneering interruption of her companion.

“That is as you think,” was the composed reply. “Small or great, they were sufficient to have kept me back from this interview, but that I was resolved to add one more effort to those I have already made, to save you from the dangers into which you are yet resolved to fall.”

“You are very kind—very benignant.”

She did not heed the impertinence of this speech, or its equally impertinent manner, as she proceeded:—

“Yet, not because I had care or interest in you, Gideon Badger, did I take these pains, or incur a risk, which your own conduct has just assured me was no small one—but for that good old man, your father, who has been more than a father to me, and whose gray hairs would go down to the grave in wretchedness, did any mishap or dishonor reach his son. I do not seek to save you from the danger so much as I seek to spare him the sorrow and the shame. You have shown yourself too little careful of my feelings, Gideon, during our long acquaintance, to deserve much at my hands, of either respect or kindness. On the contrary, since we have reached maturity, I have known you by your persecutions—by your ungenerous persecutions—rather than by any more commendable qualities or conduct. Still, I would save you—from your comrades, from yourself, from the laws which you have outraged, and which you are now about to outrage. I have kept your secret from your father, from Rawlins, from all—I have restrained, though with great difficulty, another from declaring it. I now tell you, Gideon, solemnly here and seriously, that if you go this night into the swamp, you go into unnecessary danger. I have a presentiment, Gideon, that you go never to return.”

He would have ridiculed her counsels and her fears. He made an attempt to laugh at her solemnity, but the effort degenerated into a lugubrious chuckle, that died away in a hoarse whisper in his throat.

“Tell me what *you know*,” he at length exclaimed, in a tone of emphatic utterance which sufficiently declared his apprehensions—“speak not to me of your presentiments, and all that sort of superstitious nonsense, but tell me what you have heard

—*what you know.* Come—you have it all from your man, Rawlins;—if you really desire to serve my father, and to save me, his dutiful son, to his embraces, let me know what the plan is for the catching of the beagles. A word, Rachel Morrison, a single word of positive assurance will do more than all your conjectures, superstitions, and fancies. Speak that word and I remain at Zion's Hill—I remain with you."

"With me!—But no! I will speak no bitterness, Gideon, in this moment, when your life and my hope may equally rest upon the verge of a dreadful precipice."

"Your hope and my life! What mean you? I do not understand the connection."

"Nor will I explain it, Gideon. The only warning which I am willing that you shall understand is one that I am willing to repeat. Your insolent words, tone, and manner, shall not make me less desirous of your safety; since nothing that you can say or do, can make me lose sight of what I owe to your venerable father."

"Oh this is all talk, Rachel. Can you or will you tell me nothing of these handsome fellows that are so valiantly resolved to pursue my comrades into the swamp? You see, I admit them to be comrades. You have proved yourself so close a keeper of the secret heretofore, that I can not hesitate in confiding to you my admission of the truth. I tell you, therefore, that I am sworn to go to the swamp to-night—sworn to myself and them—to convey the intelligence of the danger which is supposed to threaten them. I am bound to them for this. My safety—my very life depends upon it. If I fail them, they have their laws and penalties, to which those of society are but toys—the merest trifles that ever yet assumed the features of danger to the eyes of man. Now, Rachel, let me but clearly see that there is an occasion for your caution, and I will not go. I will have an excuse which shall secure me from the penalties of any violated oath."

"Father in heaven! and can it be, Gideon Badger, that you are so fearfully related to these men?"

"Pshaw! Rachel—you waste time with these interjections," replied the youth with tones of dogged impatience. "To the point—to the point. Is there present danger to me, and what

is its form — whence comes it — from whom — where? To that — to that, Rachel. Speak to that.”

“Have I not said — have you not heard? Surely you do not despise the attempts which Walter Rawlins and Mr. Vernon are now making? You have heard the men that brought in the prisoners?”

“Surely I know all this, Rachel Morrison, but I thought you knew more. Knowing this, I yet resolve to go. As for the danger, set your heart easy on that subject. By the dawn, when your gallant is in motion for the swamp, I shall be at Zion’s Hill again, or so near it, as to smell the breakfast; and the beagles will be so far on their way from the place of danger, that their nests will be cold enough when the hunters arrive. So, Rachel, if you will not think better of it, and go with me — I renew my offer — the best counsel I can give you is, to get to bed as soon as you may, and dream of more evil for Gideon Badger. It will be easy to dream of that which we sincerely wish.”

“I wish you nothing but good, Gideon, and once more warn you not to go into the swamp to-night. There is blood upon the path. Something tells me it will be fatal to you if you go.”

“Unless you go with me, Rachel. Nay, why will you be so stubborn? You know not what you lose, Rachel. Joys of which you never dreamed, and —”

“Go! evil son of a worthy father — go!” was the stern interruption of the maiden, as she turned from the reprobate. “You obey a written destiny. God will not suffer you to be saved by so feeble an instrument as I.”

The solemnity of these tones sounded like a trumpet in the ears of the dissolute youth, and the feeling of awful conviction which lay at the heart of Rachel Morrison, and which impressed her with the faith that no further effort could help him who had been delivered over to his doom by the fiat of Heaven, for a moment impressed itself also upon the soul of the person whom it chiefly interested. But this feeling was not suffered to obtain more than a moment’s ascendancy. The coward is frequently rash through a consciousness of his own cowardice, and the conviction that he really trembles, leads him to resolve upon a course which shall convince the spectator that he was never

more courageous in his life. He laughed at the omens which made him shudder, and mocked at the warning which terrified him. He strove to shroud his apprehensions in his ribaldry, and his last words to the maiden consisted in a renewal of his proposition to share with him the licentious life of the swamp; the freedom from all restraint, which, to his mind, seemed the very acme of human freedom and felicity. She answered his proposition by a prayer contained in a single sentence which increased the awe that dwelt within his heart: "Cut him not off in his sins. Oh, God! smite him not suddenly in thy anger."

He disappeared in that instant. He had not the spirit to respond to this.

Meanwhile, the reader must not suppose that the business in the swamp remained at a stand. On the contrary, never were men more alert to do execution in an enemy's country, than the worthy fellows under their several leaders, Rawlins, Jamison, and the amateur. The latter, however, resolute as any of the rest, when he reached the spot where he had lost his every-day habiliments, could not resist the temptation of giving to his little band, a brief narrative of those afflicting events and the other circumstances that followed his arrival in the swamp, and his connection with that arch-beagle, Jones.

At another moment it might amuse the reader, who is already familiar with these circumstances, to hear Horsey relate them. His story would seem a very different one from ours. Nay, the two would scarce seem identical in any one respect, so completely did he suppress those proofs of mental flexibility—not to say gullibility—on his part, which rendered it so easy a matter for the cunning outlaw to persuade him that the moon was a green cheese, and he the best man to cut it. As he told the tale, it seemed to his hearers, that he had traced the outlaws to their haunts designedly—that he had cheated the dull dogs into the belief that he was a simple citizen, ambitious of no fortune more lofty than that of bringing the house down in applauses of his superior merits as an actor—beyond Kemble and Forrest, Kean and Cooper. How he had concealed his real purposes, and fathomed theirs; how he had traversed their haunts, traced their secrets, learned their signs, and read all their mysteries, is a history to itself which might deserve its own volume.

Yet, such was the fellow's ingenuity, he told no lie---no actual lie—and certainly meant none. His was one of those active and flexible imaginations that grow ductile at the slightest pressure and catch the slightest change of color from the most casual cloud. His bricks soon became marble, and his fancy never went without its wings.

On the present occasion it almost involved him in a worse difficulty than he had ever been in before. While he related his experience among the beagles, who should he encounter but his old acquaintance, Mr. Bull—Aristophanes Bull—whose headstrong opposition had already been a source of such infinite discomfiture to him; and who, if time had been given him, might very soon have corrected the little mistakes so naturally made in Horsey's narration. Fortunately, Bull had been at his usual potations, and our actor was no less prompt in action than in speech. When Bull struggled forward, with a skin full, thoroughly soaked, and only half conscious of the globe's motion, asking in hoarse tones, and with a hiccough: "What the h-ll's the matter here, boys?"—he received in reply, a blow over the skull from Horsey's pistol in such downright good earnest that it would have tasked the powers of all the Bull breed to have kept him well-balanced under it. Down he went, with a thump that fully assured the actor of his intention to await him there.

This occurrence took place not twenty steps from the sleeping-place of Jones; and Horsey—little prudent as he was—began to entertain some misgivings that this cunning outlaw might be alarmed by the noise, and would give him trouble. A clump of shrub trees and one sturdy pine, stood between them and their victim; and here he commanded his men to pause until he should survey the ground alone.

He advanced cautiously, keeping himself under cover of the shrubbery as he went forward, and soon had the satisfaction to find that all was quiet in the sylvan wigwam. He then motioned his fellows to advance; and two at the entrance, and three others conveniently stationed to yield assistance to the active assailants, entirely cut off the outlaw's hope of escape.

Still he might give the alarm, and this it was important to prevent. Handkerchiefs were brought forward and got in readiness, while Horsey led the way and boldly penetrated the tent of poles

and bushes under which the enemy slept. A stout fellow followed and seconded him, and the deep breathing of the outlaw guided them to the particular place of his repose.

Still they could see nothing. They had to be guided entirely by the sense of feeling and the ear. At length, after much cautious management and some delay, they placed themselves on each side of his head. This ascertained, a whisper gave the signal, and while the stout companion of Horsey threw himself on the outlaw, the latter adroitly passed a slip-noose around his neck, and awakened the sleeper to consciousness by a pressure of no moderate force. The arms and feet of their captive were meanwhile secured by the rest of their comrades, and the power of further harm was taken from him with a promptness and completeness, that would have been creditable to greater proficient.

Still, with all their precautions, they could not altogether prevent his giving some alarm. With the readiness of a veteran, the outlaw, at the first consciousness which he had of the danger endeavored to shout the signal of the band—a whoop, borrowed from the Indians, which, with better lungs, they had learned to endow with a somewhat more terrific energy—but the unrelenting fingers of Horsey were as prompt as the beagle's tongue, and the pressure of the ligature around the jugular, suddenly cut short the sounds before they had acquired sufficient vigor to pass beyond the gorge of his throat. A guard was set over him, with orders to shoot him at the first movement or show of rescue, while the rest of the captors proceeded in search of other foes.

It will not need that we follow them. It may be necessary, however, to note one adventure of the party under Jamison. The worthy Alabamian was a second time fortunate in meeting with his quondam friend, the Irishman, Dennis O'Dougherty. His knee was upon the fellow's chest in the dark, when the brogue of the struggling prisoner declared who he was.

“Ha! Dennis, my boy—is it you?”

“By J-sus, honey, but you're a bit mistaken in the parson. I'm a very different jontleman, to your liking.”

An effort to rise succeeded this speech, which the Alabamian effectually arrested by tickling the throat of his prisoner with the point of his bowie.

"Be asy now, will you!—and don't be afther giving yourself any more throuble. Don't you think I understand plain spaking, my honey?"

"You're no fool, Dennis," said the Alabamian, as he found the Irishman lying quiet. "Had you twisted the littlest inch of your animal, Dennis, after the hint I gave you, I'd ha' been through you with more steel than Dick Smith ever swallowwed. I will but run a ploughline under your arms, Dennis, to keep you comfortable, and you may thank me that I don't put it about your gullet. Is it easy to your elbows, Dennis?"

"Asy! J-sus, Mr. Jamison, are you a jontleman?"

"Well, anything to make you comfortable; and so I'll let out a little; but, look you, Dennis, be quiet. I'm going from you a bit, and if you're not quiet, the man that watches you won't leave the skin to your teeth. He's a raal Ingin at sculping, and your head will be at his skirts, while your tongue's chattering about it."

But the smaller villains are not our object, and it will suffice to say, that it was not a difficult task, so complete had been the surprise, to capture nearly all the inmates of the swamp. The number at Cane Castle was usually small—the great body of the fraternity, as detailed in our former work, being engaged in active operations while traversing the country. Vernon knew that everything depended on the capture or death of the chief—the master-spirit who had conceived a plan of operations so extensive, so bold, so well detailed, and so sternly carried out. To this labor, as we have seen, he devoted himself. A livelier interest served to stimulate his zeal, and to make him no less anxious and eager than resolute for the conflict. He knew that if he found Saxon awake, the struggle that would probably ensue, must be mortal. For this issue his energies of mind and body were braced to the utmost, and the image of Virginia Maitland, in the power of the ruffian and suffering from his violence, gave a terrible earnestness to his resolve, from the first moment when he embarked upon the adventure. He did find the outlaw awake, and under circumstances to keep alive the indignation and resolution of his heart. Conducted by the dwarf, Stillyards, to the wigwam, known among the beagles as the squatter's cabin at Little Bend, he beheld at a single glance, the

object of his affections, and the object of his hate. Virginia Maitland was before him, and before her was Saxon. The circumstances under which they stood, made the blood boil within the veins of the inflamed beholder, and he found it difficult so to restrain his passion, as to look around him with deliberation, and determine calmly what course to pursue. The house in which they were, was a common fabric of logs such as is universal in the new countries of the southwest. It stood upon pine blocks, about four feet from the ground. It consisted of two rooms, separated from each other by a thin partition, the door of which opened in the centre. Each room had an entrance from without, independent of the other, and a single window in each sufficed to give it light. On the present occasion the doors and windows were closed, and the observation of Vernon was made through crevices between the logs of the building, of which the number was sufficient for all the purposes of espionage. Conducted by the dwarf, Stillyards, to one of these crevices, which the urchin seemed to find very readily, the objects that met the eyes of Vernon increased his emotions. Virginia Maitland was seated on a rude chair, at the door-way between the two rooms, her back to the one, which happened to be the sleeping apartment, and her face to Saxon, who strode the room before her. Her hands were clasped and resting upon her knees. Her neck and head were bent forward, while her eyes, with a tearless anxiety, watched every movement of the outlaw, as keenly as one would watch the form of the panther crouching in the tree above him, and in the attitude to spring. It was evident that as yet no outrage, other than that of her abduction, had been attempted by the ruffian; but her looks amply testified her fears, while his as clearly manifested his desires. That the outlaw had been striving to persuade her to his purposes was evident enough, and that his persuasions only awakened her apprehensions, might be inferred from her attitude of mixed prayer, watchfulness, and terror.

Such was the picture that first met the eye of Vernon. The words of Saxon a moment after, that met his ears, confirmed all the first impressions which it made upon his mind; and he placed the muzzle of his pistol, which was already cocked and in his hand, at the opening, which was sufficiently large to

admit of his certain aim at the ruffian. But his cheek glowed a moment after with a feeling akin to shame. Vernon was not familiar with the shedding of blood, and no man who is not—unless he be equally cowardly and malignant—can possibly take life, except in the whirl and excitement of actual conflict. He felt that there was something base, from his place of concealment, to shoot down the unconscious man, however deserving he might be of his doom. To fling down from its erect place and posture an image so noble, made after the form of God, and filled with such godlike attributes and endowments, is, at best, and under its most justifiable circumstances, a melancholy performance; and with something of a romantic resolution, such as makes the wisest of men rash at seasons, he determined upon the bolder and more generous measure of giving the outlaw the benefit of an equal struggle. Such a prize as Virginia Maitland, seemed to justify every hazard, and Vernon resolved upon the very last.

He rose from his recumbent position, and was about to proceed toward the doorway, when he felt a hand laid lightly upon his shoulder. Stillyards, meanwhile, had disappeared. He turned at the interruption—fancying another enemy at his elbow—and met the eyes of a woman—one so youthful and so beautiful as to strike him with wonder at seeing her in so wild a place. She met his gaze seemingly without emotion. There was a calm solemnity in her aspect, seen by the serious starlight, which riveted his attention, commanded his respect, and would have subdued, even in a far less reverent mind than his, any ribald thoughts or suspicions.

“Stay!—but a single instant,” she whispered, and her uplifted finger gave him like warning. Before he could answer her, or imagine the object of her intrusion, she was gone from sight—literally vanished behind an angle of the building.

But her warning was forgotten with her disappearance. Vernon was too much aroused for unnecessary delay, particularly, too, as he saw not the reason of the woman’s injunctions; and, just then, the pleading tones of Virginia’s voice reached his ears in supplication and alarm. Breathless, he darted upon the steps of massive pine that led to the door of the building, and with a single blow of his heel, sent it from its hinges. Another

moment found him within the apartment, and face to face with the outlaw.

The proceeding was the work of an instant, but it found the outlaw prepared. He seized his pistols, which lay on a table near him, and instantly presented them.

Vernon had not seen them before; and had he but waited, as he had been counselled by Florence Marbois, this danger would have been spared him. In the same moment when Saxon grasped the weapons, the hand of Florence was stretched out from the inner apartment to which she had penetrated with noiseless footsteps, for the purpose of securing them.

But, though Saxon grasped and cocked the pistols at his enemy, he did not dare to use them. With the first appearance of Vernon, Virginia had started to her feet, and at the sight of his danger, she rushed between the parties, alternately turning an imploring face and an uplifted hand to each. She no longer exhibited the passive attitude of fear. All apprehension for herself departed when she feared for her lover; and that living grace of form and movement, which speaks out when the mother-mood prevails, riveted, at the same moment, with a sense of equal admiration, the souls of Vernon and the outlaw.

And there, on each side of her, the hostile parties stood—she, the angel between them, preventing strife, if not securing peace. Her words, wild, incoherent, impetuous, addressed the one and then the other; but failed of much effect upon either. Her position alone controlled the warfare which her presence was yet calculated to inspire.

Suddenly, the arms of Saxon were grasped by Florence from behind; a deep imprecation burst from the outlaw's lips as he distinguished her. Vainly did he strive to shake her off; and the moment lost in this effort enabled Vernon to grapple with him at advantage. While they struggled, the dwarf, Stillyards, dropped upon the shoulders of the outlaw from the scantling above; and before he could be shaken off or removed, he had dug with his nails—which had been suffered to grow to an inordinate length—entirely into the ears of his late leader. This was one of the forms of retribution which consoled him for the similar indignity to which Saxon had subjected himself. By this time the house was filled; and the outlaw chief, who had

struggled manfully while any hope remained to him, now yielded quietly to numbers.

"This, then, is your work, Florence," he murmured, as the woman he had wronged confronted him.

"Ay, mine! I glory in it—I rejoice, too, that you feel it to be mine! You could scorn my love!—perhaps, that was not so great an error as to scorn my power! It glads me to the soul to think that you can feel it and acknowledge it at last!"

"If that will give you pleasure, Florence, be happy. If it can atone for the wrongs which I have done you, to know that you have compassed my doom, you have ample vengeance. I owe my death to your hands."

"Your death atone, Edward Saxon, for my misery!—for the wrong done to my honor—to my hope—to my pride—to my affections—to all things, and thoughts, and feelings, which are dear to woman—which ennoble her to herself and endear her to society! Monstrous vanity! Your death, Edward Saxon, were you thrice to die, could never atone for the wrongs you have inflicted on the frail, fond, foolish heart of Florence Marbois! You have taken from her all that made life precious—and the life which seems so desirable to you, is her scorn! Look, and see what is her value of life, Edward Saxon; and, if you be not utterly base, you will yet learn from her example how to baffle the hangman. She to whom you ascribe your fate, will show you how completely indifferent you have made her to her own."

She advanced closely as she spoke to her betrayer. Her majestic form seemed to tower far above its usual height; and no language could describe the bitter scorn which looked from all her features, as she mocked him with that love of life which she professed to feel no longer. While yet the last words trembled on her lips, she drove a dagger, which till then was concealed within her garments, deep down into her breast. The deed was done before eye could see or hand interpose to prevent it. She was caught, while falling, by Vernon. Her last words, clear and emphatic, though broken, were addressed to the outlaw:—

"Live, Edward Saxon—if life be so precious to you—live!"

It has nothing precious now for me! To you I owe it, at least, that death is also without pain! Live!—live!”

Her eyes followed him even in death. He strove, but vainly, to avert his own. He could not—he dared not. She had conquered, and the spell of her power was upon him in her dying moments. Unconsciously, the long breath escaped from him like a convulsive groan, when the thick glaze passing over her eyes, rescued him from the fascinating intensity of their glance. Big drops suddenly started out upon his brow, as if he underwent a fearful agony; and his limbs tottered like one feeble with a long sickness, as they led him from the apartment under guard.

CHAPTER XLIII.

FINALE—TWO-FOLD RINGING OF THE BELLS, FOR FATE AND FELICITY—FUNERAL AND BRIDAL.

“Last scene of all,
That ends this strange, eventful history.”—SHAKSPERE.

VERNON bore Virginia Maitland, swooning, from this terrible scene, the actual performance of which had occupied far less time than our description of it. It had passed before the maiden's eyes, more like some dreadful phantasmagoria of the magician, than an event of actual life. He bore her into the fresh air, which partly revived her; and, under the direction and with the assistance of Horsey—who affected a better knowledge of Cane Castle than he really had—succeeded in finding and conveying her to the little cottage, the mistress of which had put so fearful a finish to a life of feverish pain and most unhappy excitement. The last sacrifice was paid to the lingering sentiment of that love which still survived jealousy and anger, and which nothing but death could utterly extinguish. She had obtained the vengeance which she sought; and the thirst for which, in the first moment of her misery, had overborne the more native feeling of her heart. That done, the

original passion resumed some portion of its activity, but only to make her feel still more acutely the undesirable and worthless character of all that remained to life; and the resolution to end it—taken at a moment when her vengeance was yet doubtful—seemed more than ever proper to her abased and erring spirit, when its claims were all satisfied. Is it sinful to hope that her crime was softened by her sufferings? There was so much that was bright and noble in her soul amid all its smoke and impurities, that humanity may well be suffered to presume upon the indulgence of mercy, in behalf of one, in whose soul, amid all the cloud, the smoke, and the impurity, there was so much that was really noble in sentiment, and bright and beautiful in thought. Florence Marbois, under other auspices, had been one of those lovely lights of society, that guide the hearts which they warm, and hallow the affections which they inspire and requite.

Pass we to the living, no less lovely, and purer woman—to the fair Virginia, who, in the arms of Vernon, was soon restored, not less to the consciousness of life, than of those dear emotions that sanctify and sometimes make it heaven! If the past scene of terror, and strife, and death, through which she had been hurried, was not forgotten, its sting at least was taken away by the conviction that all who were dear to her had gone through it in safety, and that all danger to herself and others was *past*. She could now breathe in unrestraint, and yield herself for a space to that freedom of soul which delights in making its acknowledgments to the beloved one. If ever maiden were justified in speaking freely her happiness to her lover, it is she who has just been rescued by his gallantry from the most evil forms of danger.

Virginia, in the hour of her deliverance, had no reserve. She hung upon the bosom of Vernon, happy in the weakness, which, while it made his valor dear to her, furnished her with the best apology to cling to his embrace.

A moment was given to these raptures—a brief moment; and the lover was recalled by one of his subordinates to a recollection of his further duties. The night was fleeting fast, and it was the counsel of Rawlins, Jamison, and such other of his men, as had a claim to advise in the proceedings, that they

should instantly cross the river, and, with their prisoners, retrace their steps toward Zion's Hill. But Vernon thought otherwise. He knew the difficulty of travelling by night through unaccustomed swamps along with a daring set of men, who, though bound, might yet prove troublesome; and who, indeed, might readily find succor from passing bands of their companions. There was yet another reason which led Vernon to defer the movement of his party until morning.

"Doubtless," he said, "there are individuals of this gang going from and coming into the swamp at all hours of the night. By preserving the utmost silence where we are, placing a guard in each of their places of watch, and answering after their own fashion, any signals that we may hear from without, we shall be able to gather into our fold a few more of these scoundrels. I would not like to do the work by halves; still less am I willing to risk what has been gained by any precipitation of movement to-night. Our task now is easy; we have only to secure thoroughly the prisoners."

"That is already done," said Rawlins, interrupting him.

"Then our work is easy. It lacks but three hours to the dawn. We must keep our eyes open for that space of time, and our weapons ready, and with the first gleam of light we can safely cross the river with all our captives. To move now would be to risk their loss, and, perhaps, our own. It is no easy matter to keep track in a strange region, and at night, with prisoners whom we may have to drive before us, and who might drop us in the darkness without greatly suffering from our pistols. Have the horses come?—have you heard the signal from the other bank?"

"They are there. Pollard crossed over to them by my order a bit ago," was the reply.

"It is well! Everything favors us, men. We have lost no life, but little blood, and have so far succeeded in all our objects. Let us lose nothing by rashness. Coolness now and carefulness can alone secure our conquests. To you, Rawlins, as you know the swamp best of all of us, I must assign the task of placing guards over the best positions—and—hark! do you hear nothing? That surely was a signal."

"A beagle, by the powers! Here's fish for our net!" ex-

claimed Rawlins, as he started from the thicket where this conference had taken place. Jamison was about to follow, as also Horsey, but Vernon arrested them.

"Rawlins is enough, and you might confuse him. He is equal to any robber of the gang, and will do the business more effectually if let alone. Hark! already he answers. His bay is quite as good as any of the beagles."

Vernon's judgment was correct. The sturdy woodman hurried in the direction of the sound, which still continued to reach his ears at intervals, becoming more and more clear and distinct as the party drew nigh. He stationed himself under cover at a point where he had surprised one of the robbers, and, responding to the signal as he did so, coolly awaited the approach of the intruder. As the latter emerged on horseback from the woods above, he addressed the counterfeit presentment with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance:—

"Ha! that you, Baker, or Chambers, which?"

Rawlins grunted forth a sound which might pass for an affirmative. He feared to trust his own voice till he had the robber in his power; and it was fortunate that the latter had too much himself to say to regret the taciturnity of his companion. As he spoke, a chill went through the bones of Rawlins. A few sentences soon assured him that it was Gideon Badger who addressed him. That profligate son of a man whose purism assured him with a chuckle, that he was not like the miserable Pharisees around him, having demanded of the sentinel to lead him to the place where the chief of the outlaws slept, proceeded to develop his great discoveries to his companion, in anticipation of that revelation which he proposed to make to Saxon, and by which, with all the mean spirit of an inferior's servility, he calculated to commend himself to new favor in his sight. Rawlins could only make his responses in a groan.

"What do you groan for, Baker?" demanded the other. "There's no danger now that we know all about it. We've time enough to scud and run to-night, and to-morrow we can turn upon that bullhead, Rawlins, and dog his heels back to Zion's Hill. Nay, with a little increase of force, we should be able to lather him at his own weapons and at any weapons.

For my part, I'd rather it should be so. Nothing would give me half so much pleasure as to try the chance of a little scuffle with that fellow. If I didn't—"

"Gideon Badger," said Rawlins, in his natural tone of voice, "you have your wish. I am Wat Rawlins, and we're face to face. Now, show your manhood—all your manhood, Gideon—for you fight, let me tell you, for something more than Rachel Morrison—you fight for life! You fight with a rope round your neck."

"Wat Rawlins!" gasped the confounded youth, as he heard the words and recognised the voice of one whom in his secret soul he feared—"can it be!"

"Are you ready?" demanded the woodman. "Be quick, Gideon; I know I'm not doing right when I give you this chance for your life; but I want to save your old father from the shame of having son of his hung up by the neck. If I kill you, which will be all the better for you, I'll keep the secret, and bury you in the swamp with my own hands, so that nobody shall ever know that we met you here to-night. Come!"

"I will not fight with you," was the hoarse but tremulous response of the youth.

"I'm sorry for you, Gideon Badger," said Rawlins, with an expression of pity in his accents, not unmingled with disgust. "I would have saved you from something worse than death. I'm sorry you're not as brave as your father. I can do no more. You must go with me—you're my prisoner."

He grasped the imbecile around his body as he spoke, with a grasp that would have defied his utmost powers. But these the unhappy youth did not offer to exercise. His heart seemed to have turned to water with the first conviction of his mind that Walter Rawlins really stood before him. His nerves failed him. His muscles shrunk and seemed to wither. Rawlins carried him into the presence of Vernon and the rest with as little trouble as if he had been an infant.

The victors, having secured their new captive, had no further interruption in the swamp that night. With the first glimmering of dawn, Vernon made his preparations for crossing the river to the place where the horses of the party had been carried. This was a task more tedious than difficult. Some of the men were compelled to swim the river with a rope which had

been previously fastened to the flat, and which was absolutely necessary in conveying across the river Virginia Maitland, Mrs. Yarbers—who had been an active coadjutor of the assailing party—the prisoners, and the inanimate form of Florence Marbois, which the gentler heart of Virginia would not suffer to be buried in the still and gloomy recesses of that swamp-forest in which she had dwelt so long. Rawlins ventured to promise that the cemetery at Zion's Hill should yield her a more consecrated place of repose. Her body, stretched out in the bottom of the boat, and completely enveloped in a cloak, was a subject of fearful interest to Saxon, who was compelled, from the smallness of the vessel and the number of its passengers, to remain unwillingly contiguous to it. More than once was he seen to shudder as he looked upon the unmeaning and almost shapeless outline, through the thick envelope of which, however, his keen-eyed and conscious spirit, beheld the reproachful expression of that face, and all those glances of love, and those features of beauty, which had once yielded him so much delight, and which his own capricious and unjust passions had obliterated and destroyed. His present situation, mostly to be ascribed to his own injustice to the one who most loved him, gave emphasis to those rebukes of conscience which now, for the first time, were acutely active in the contemplation of her corse. At this moment a persuasion of sentimental softness almost seized his mind—he felt that love would have still preserved him, had he still been true to love. Unhappily for him and her, love and conscience equally spoke too late. A desperate resolution succeeded in his mind, and he turned his eyes upon the dark and turbid waters over which he was passing with an expression of anxious desire.

Could he gain the side of the boat, a single plunge would baffle his captors, and defeat all the terrors of a public doom. His hands were bound, but his feet were free. He gave a single glance to the inanimate form of Florence, and made a movement to the opposite side of the flat. Already his foot touched the low gunwale, when the firm grasp of the watchful Vernon upon his shoulder, showed him that his object was discovered. He was led back into the centre of the boat, and surrounded by those who noted all his movements, with eyes too jealous to

leave him any present hope of baffling their observation. Bitter, indeed, was the glance which he cast upon Vernon, as the latter withdrew his hand from the shoulder of the felon.

"There was a time, Mr. Vernon, when you were less willing to approach me with so little scruple;—that, however, was when I was better able to approach you. Times change; and he who would have trembled to hear the lion's growl in the desert, takes him boldly by the mane when in the menagerie. Well! courage seems to depend very much upon the season. A bright or dark day makes a wonderful difference in the hearts of men. You are in season now, sir—much more so, I think, than when I met you at Lucchesa. Your hand is more ready now."

"It is my good fortune to improve then, sir," replied Vernon, mildly and with a smile. "A for your notion of my courage, let that be as you choose. If you can really persuade yourself that it is not of the proper kind, and the persuasion pleases you, indulge it. My courage is of a sort that will remain perfectly unaffected, whatever course your opinion may take upon it. Another quality of it will be to take every precaution against the exercise of yours. In my custody you are safe enough. I would not forget myself, sir, by using the language of exultation over a prisoner, however small may be the forbearance which he merits at my hands."

"Oh, you are too indulgent!" was the almost fierce reply of the outlaw—"too indulgent! Would I could thank you as I could wish—as you deserve."

A moment after, and Saxon felt the feeble fury of his manner and stopped suddenly, while a burning flush passed over his cheeks. Vernon turned away. They had now reached the opposite bank.

* * * *

An hour after this, and the cavalcade encountered a motley party of ten or a dozen men, headed by old William Badger himself. He was dressed up partially in some of the remnants of the ancient uniform which he wore when he followed Andrew Jackson down from Tennessee to his Indian battles in the southwest. The old and ragged cap which covered his grisly locks, the pistols in his holsters, the belt about his waist, and the long

rifle in his grasp—were all the same; and here, it may be added that, though he wore it not on this occasion, he yet, before sallying forth that morning, gave a long and curious examination to the ancient and motley blue wrapper, known in its day as a hunting-shirt—which had been too intimately associated in all the deeds and doings of his prime to be discarded altogether even when the period of its usefulness was past.

The ancient leader, however, made a far less ludicrous appearance than his men, with whom, in the sudden emergency that called them forth, motley seemed indeed to be “the only wear.” At another time, the appearance of this regiment would have moved Vernon and all his followers to unrestrained merriment; but there was a strong feeling in their hearts at this moment which effectually restrained all lighter moods. The thought that the venerable old man was marching forward to behold his own and only son, bound as an outlaw, and destined to all the penalties of such a life, filled them all with a sorrow that was not less deep because it was speechless. The very unconsciousness of the old man as he drew nigh—the rigid and pompous erectness of his carriage, and the swelling dignity of his manner—contributed to increase the solemnity of their feelings. Who should convey the truth to the father? It tasked the boldest heart and the best mind of the troop.

Vernon rode forward as he approached, and giving instructions with Rawlins to keep his prisoners out of sight as long as possible, undertook the painful task of revealing the truth to the venerable elder. The task was rendered more difficult by the self-esteem of Badger. Assuming himself to have been ill-treated, overlooked, slighted, and in fact thrust aside from the performance of his proper duties, by beardless boys, still in the gristle, inspired more by presumption than patriotism, he scarcely gave Vernon a civil recognition.

But the latter, at such a time, and to one so much his elder, would have been ashamed to entertain any boyish resentments; and he bore patiently with the captiousness of the father, and by gradual degrees, brought him step by step to a consciousness of the gulf that was so suddenly to open before him. When the truth was fully shown—when the tale was fully told—there was no more visible emotion in the face of the hearer, beyond

a slight quiver of the lips, than if he had listened to the most ordinary intelligence. His keen eyes, from under their shaggy brows, narrowly scanned the countenance of the speaker, and there, reading nothing but sincerity and distinctness, dropped quietly upon the ground. His lips opened but to exclaim:—

“Son of mine! son of mine! Oh, God! thou hast indeed stricken me with thy wrath. Verily, thou has terribly rebuked the pride that was shooting upward like a rank weed within my heart.”

The exclamation denoted that self-esteem, still strong, still luxuriant, and still well cultivated in a favorite field, which was the predominant characteristic of his mind. That Gideon should be a bad fellow, was an unfortunate thing for Gideon; but it was something monstrous exceedingly, that Gideon, the son of William, should become so. “After this”—such was the still self-complaisant reflection of the elder—“who will believe in education?”

The stern habits of the soldier, and the pride of the patriotic magistrate, came to the succor of the old man.

“These wretched people must be committed for trial, Mr. Vernon, and though you have heretofore found yourself sufficient to do without my help, as a man, it is probable that you will require my assistance as a magistrate. Let them be brought before me, sir, as soon as you please, that I may examine them for commitment.”

“All, sir?” said Vernon.

“Ay, sir, all! God will sustain me, I trust, as he hath ever done, so that I shall be able to perform the trusts which have been confided to me, without fear or favor. I trust in his mercy to have no feeling with one more than another of these unhappy wretches.”

The reader need not ask to know, how such a man went through such a trial. William Badger’s proceedings on the present occasion, would have gained for him, in Roman ages, a column of enduring fame.

Our story is nearly ended. That very day Horsey was made a special deputy, with two others, to arrest Mr. Justice Nawls; but the bird had flown. He had received from some secret quarter a warning of his danger, and had disappeared on a fleet

horse an hour before the appearance of the party sent to arrest. The return to the magistrate was one which is said to have assumed the official dignity in some of the states—G. T. T.—which, rendered into the vernacular, signifies “Gone to Texas.” There is a report current at this time on the Big Black, that Nawls has become a great patriot in Texas, and has distinguished himself by several military achievements of no common order. He is not the first citizen who has lived a scoundrel to die a patriot. It was fortunate for the amateur that he did not take Mrs. Horsey with him to Texas, and make her a patriot too. Perhaps he would have done so, had time been allowed him. How many good deeds are defeated through a want of time.

When the roving husband and his lovely wife returned to Zion’s Hill, who should they encounter there but the venerable sire of the former, limping as much as ever, quite as rash and boisterous, and full of storms and cataracts at the sight of the fugitive. He had come, in obedience to Vernon’s letters, along with Ben Carter; and was confounded to meet a living son, where he thought it might be difficult to find even a dead one. His very joy—such was the force of habit—took the features, and indulged in the language of anger and abuse.

“You ungrateful spendthrift—you—”

He was silenced by a very summary proceeding. He little knew the sort of answer his son had in store for him.

“Make you acquainted with Mrs. Tom Horsey, dad,” said he, with a swagger admirably theatrical, as he strutted full up to the old man, with the shrinking Mary hanging on his arm.

“Mrs. Tom Horsey! Why, Tom, it can’t be possible. I expected to find you dead, and here you’re only married. But are you married, Tom?”

“Ay, dad, if the ceremony performed by such a scoundrel as Squire Nawls is worth a fig.”

“Well, God bless you, Tom—you’re born to be an actor after all. And you, my gal—who are you—what’s your name? And, since you are Tom’s wife, give’s a smack. Another! another! Well, Tom, to a young man, marrying’s not so bad after all. But where’s Ben Carter?”

This a question which we may also ask. In another apart-

ment, to themselves, Carter and his unfaithful friend, Maitland, communed for a lengthened hour. They came forth reconciled. Maitland frankly confessed his offences equally against friendship and good morals; and in making every atonement which had been left, he found Carter as he had ever found him, an indulgent benefactor.

The relation in which Vernon stood to Virginia contributed greatly to this end. They also, to themselves, had their own explanations to make, and their several adventures to relate; the day promised fair, amid all the clouds that overcast the horizon at the beginning, to terminate in equal calm and brightness. To the three happy sets, whom we have conducted with persevering industry through the groves to the temple—from love to marriage—such, indeed, was its termination; but there was one storm that passed through the forest about this time which filled even their hearts with solemn shudderings, and for a long season after maintained a heavy weight upon their memories. Rawlins, who, with a select party, had the charge of the prisoners, returned at midnight, alone, to Zion's Hill, and brought with him a terrible narrative of outrage and bloodshed. The mob had risen upon his little party, and rescued the prisoners from his hands. But they did not rescue them to save. Goaded to madness by the long-repeated crimes of the outlaws, they had resolved not to wait the tardy proceedings of justice; and in equal defiance of the entreaties and the efforts of the little guard, the unhappy criminals were dragged to death from their custody and protection. Another moment precipitated their doom. They were drawn up by the ropes which bound them, to the swinging branches over head, and hurried into eternity without a moment's grace—their prayers drowned—their convulsions mocked in the frantic joy and the exulting shouts of the populace.

The unlawfulness of their punishment suggests the only occasion for sympathy in their behalf. They died on a spot which they themselves had deprived of all the securities of law, and had shadowed with every sort of crime. They perished by a reckless rage, for which a partial sanction may be found in the wantonness and brutality of their own deeds—in their unscrupulous robberies, their frequent cruelties, and most unfeel-

ing murders. Saxon died as he had lived, a brave, fearless man. Perhaps, the compunctious writhings which troubled him at the death of Florence Marbois, had made him better prepared to die. In his death perished the spirit, the energy, and the capacity of the Border Beagles. He had made them what they were—resolute, compact—one and indivisible. Scattered at his death, they lost the faculties which had made them powerful, and have generally given up the more daring profession for others of a like but less dangerous character. Some, like Nawls, have gone to Texas, filled with a sudden desire of becoming patriots—others have taken to shaving, speculating, and banking; and a few, it is reported, have formed a new confederacy which bears the innocent, if not unmeaning title of “The Hypothecators.” What is the particular occupation which, under this head, they intend pursuing, is only conjectural. The more knowing seem to think that their purpose is nothing worse than the invention of fancy stocks; the designs of which they will dispose of to the numberless associations of humbug, which cover this scheming nation as with an eighth plague. The locusts of the Egyptian never diminished his crops with half the success with which our locusts, the progeny of that fruitful Scotchman, John Law, have devastated the fields of Mississippi. The Border Beagles were nothing to them as public enemies.

THE END.



CHARLEMONT

OR

THE PRIDE OF THE VILLAGE

A TALE OF KENTUCKY

By W. GILMORE SIMMS, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "THE PARTISAN"—"MELlichAMPE"—"KATHARINE WALTON"—
"THE FORAYERS"—"THE SCOUT"—"WOODCRAFT"—"BEAUCHAMPE," ETC

"Nor will I be secure,
In any confidence of mine own strength,
For such security is oft the mother
Of negligence, and that, the occasion
Of unremedy'd ruin." *Microcosmus*—THO. NABBS.



New York:

A. C. ARMSTRONG & SON,
714 BROADWAY

1882.

CHARLTON

THE HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE

OF THE VILLAGE OF CHARLTON

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1856,

By J. S. REDFIELD,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the Southern
District of New York.



SAVAGE & MCCREA, STEREOTYPERS,
13 CHAMBERS STREET, NEW YORK.

TO THE
HON. JAMES HALL,
OF CINCINNATI:

AS ONE OF THE ABLEST OF OUR LITERARY PIONEERS;
A GENUINE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GREAT WEST;

WHOSE WRITINGS

EQUALLY ILLUSTRATE HER HISTORY AND GENIUS:

this story of "CHARLEMONT," and its Sequel "BEAUCHAMPE,"
are respectfully inscribed by

THEIR AUTHOR.

WOODLANDS, S. C.

December, 1855.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE domestic legend which follows, is founded upon actual events of comparatively recent occurrence in the state of Kentucky. However strange the facts may appear in the sequel—however in conflict with what are usually supposed to be the sensibilities and characteristics of woman—they are yet unquestionably true; most of them having been conclusively established, by the best testimony, before a court of justice. Very terrible, indeed, was the tragedy to which they conducted—one that startled the whole country when it took place, and the mournful interest of which will long be remembered. More on this subject need not be mentioned here. The narrative, it is hoped, will satisfy all the curiosity of the reader. It has been very carefully prepared from and according to the evidence; the art of the romancer being held in close subjection to the historical authorities. I have furnished only the necessary details which would fill such blanks in the story as are of domestic character; taking care that these should accord, in all cases, with the despotic facts. In respect to these, I have seldom appealed to invention. It is in the delineation and development of character, only, that I have made free to furnish scenes, such as appeared to me calculated to perfect the portraits, and the better to reconcile

the reader to real occurrences, which, in their original nakedness, however unquestionably true, might incur the risk of being thought improbabilities.

The reflections which will be most likely to arise from the perusal of such a history, lead us to a consideration of the social characteristics of the time and region, and to a consideration of the facility with which access to society is afforded by the manners and habits of our forest population. It is in all newly-settled countries, as among the rustic population of most nations, that the absence of the compensative resources of wealth leads to a singular and unreserved freedom among the people. In this way, society endeavors to find equivalents for those means of enjoyment which a wealthy people may procure from travel, from luxury, from the arts, and the thousand comforts of a well-provided homestead. The population of a frontier country, lacking such resources, scattered over a large territory, and meeting infrequently, feel the lack of social intercourse; and this lack tends to break down most of the barriers which a strict convention usually establishes for the protection, not only of sex and caste, but of its own tastes and prejudices. Lacking the resources of superior wealth, population, and civilization, the frontier people are naturally required to throw the doors open as widely as possible, in order to obtain that intercourse with their fellows which is, perhaps, the first great craving of humanity. As a matter of necessity, there is little discrimination exercised in the admission of their guests. A specious outside, agreeable manners, cleverness and good humor, will soon make their way into confidence, without requiring other guaranties for the moral of the stranger. The people are naturally frank and hospitable; for the simple reason that these qualities

of character are essential for procuring them that intercourse which they crave. The habits are accessible, the restraints few, the sympathies are genial, active, easily aroused, and very confiding. It follows, naturally, that they are frequently wronged and outraged, and just as naturally that their resentments are keen, eager, and vindictive. The self-esteem, if not watchful, is revengeful; and society sanctions promptly the fierce redress—that wild justice of revenge—which punishes without appeal to law, with its own right hand, the treacherous guest who has abused the unsuspecting confidence which welcomed him to a seat upon the sacred hearth. In this brief portrait of the *morale* of society, upon our frontiers, you will find the *materiel* from which this story has been drawn, and its justification, as a correct delineation of border life in one of its more settled phases in the new states. The social description of Charlemont exhibits, perhaps, a *third* advance in our forest civilization, from the original settlement.

It is not less the characteristic of these regions to exhibit the passions and the talents of the people in equal and wonderful saliency. We are accordingly struck with two classes of social facts, which do not often arrest the attention in old communities. We see, for example, the most singular combination of simplicity and sagacity in the same person; simplicity in conventional respects, and sagacity in all that affects the absolute and real in life, nature and the human sensibilities. The rude man, easily imposed upon, in his faith, fierce as an outlaw in his conflicts with men, will be yet exquisitely alive to the nicest consciousness of woman; will as delicately appreciate her instincts and sensibilities, as if love and poetry had been his only tutors

from the first, and had mainly addressed their labors to this one object of the higher heart, education ; and in due degree with the tenderness with which he will regard the sex, will be the vindictive ferocity with which—even though no kinsman—he will pursue the offender who has dared to outrage them in the case of any individual. In due degree as his faith is easy will his revenges be extreme. In due degree as he is slow to suspect the wrong-doer, will be the tenacity of his pursuit when the offender requires punishment. He seems to throw wide his heart and habitation, but you must beware how you trespass upon the securities of either.

The other is a mental characteristic which leads to frequent surprises among strangers from the distant cities. It consists in the wonderful inequality between his mental and social development. The same person who will be regarded as a boor in good society, will yet exhibit a rapidity and profundity of thought and intelligence—a depth and soundness of judgment—an acuteness in discrimination—a logical accuracy, and critical analysis, such as mere good society rarely shows, and such as books almost as rarely teach. There will be a deficiency of refinement, taste, art—all that the polished world values so highly—and which it seems to cherish and encourage to the partial repudiation of the more essential properties of intellect. However surprising this characteristic may appear, it may yet be easily accounted for by the very simplicity of a training which results in great directness and force of character—a frank heartiness of aim and object—a truthfulness of object which suffers the thoughts to turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but to press forward decisively to the one object—a determined will, and a restless

instinct—which, conscious of the deficiencies of wealth and position, is yet perpetually seeking to supply them from the resources within its reach. These characteristics will be found illustrated in the present legend, an object which it somewhat contemplates, apart from the mere story with which they are interwoven.

A few words more in respect to our heroine, Margaret Cooper. It is our hope and belief, that she will be found a real character by most of our readers. She is drawn from the life, and with a severe regard to the absolute features of the original. In these days of “strong-minded women,” even more certainly than when the portrait was first taken, the identity of the sketch with its original will be sure of recognition. Her character and career will illustrate most of the mistakes which are made by that ambitious class, among the gentler sex, who are now seeking so earnestly to pass out from that province of humiliation to which the sex has been circumscribed from the first moment of recorded history. What she will gain by the motion, if successful, might very well be left to time, were it not that the proposed change in her condition threatens fatally some of her own and the best securities of humanity. We may admit, and cheerfully do so, that she might, with propriety, be allowed some additional legal privileges of a domestic sort. But the great object of attainment, which is the more serious need of the sex—her own more full development as a responsible being—seems mainly to depend upon herself, and upon self-education. The great first duty of woman is in her becoming the mother of men; and this duty implies her proper capacity for the education and training of the young. To fit her properly for this duty, her education should become more elevated, and more

severe in degree with its elevation. But the argument is one of too grave, too intricate, and excursive a character, to be attempted here. It belongs to a very different connection. It is enough, in this place, to say that Margaret Cooper possesses just the sort of endowment to make a woman anxious to pass the guardian boundaries which hedge in her sex—her danger corresponds with her desires. Her securities, with such endowments, and such a nature, can only be found in a strict and appropriate education, such as woman seldom receives anywhere, and less, perhaps, in this country than in any other. To train fully the feminine mind, without in any degree impairing her susceptibilities and sensibilities, seems at once the necessity and the difficulty of the subject. Her very influence over man lies in her sensibilities. It will be to her a perilous fall from pride of place, and power, when, goaded by an insane ambition, in the extreme development of her mere intellect, she shall forfeit a single one of these securities of her sex.

CHARLEMONT.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCENE.

THE stormy and rugged winds of March were overblown—the first fresh smiling days of April had come at last—the days of sunshine and shower, of fitful breezes, the breath of blossoms, and the newly-awakened song of birds. Spring was there in all the green and glory of her youth, and the bosom of Kentucky heaved with the prolific burden of the season. She had come, and her messengers were everywhere, and everywhere busy. The birds bore her glad tidings to

“Alley green,
Dingle or bushy dell of each wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side—”

nor were the lately-trodden and seared grasses of the forests left unnoted; and the humbled flower of the wayside sprang up at her summons. Like some loyal and devoted people, gathered to hail the approach of a long-exiled and well-beloved sovereign, they crowded upon the path over which she came, and yielded themselves with gladness at her feet. The mingled songs and sounds of their rejoicing might be heard, and far-off murmurs of gratulation, rising from the distant hollows, or coming faintly over the hill-

tops, in accents not the less pleasing because they were the less distinct. That lovely presence which makes every land blossom, and every living thing rejoice, met, in the happy region in which we meet her now, a double tribute of honor and rejoicing.

The "dark and bloody ground," by which mournful epithets Kentucky was originally known to the Anglo-American, was dark and bloody no longer. The savage had disappeared from its green forests for ever, and no longer profaned with slaughter, and his unholy whoop of death, its broad and beautiful abodes. A newer race had succeeded; and the wilderness, fulfilling the better destinies of earth, had begun to blossom like the rose. Conquest had fenced in its sterile borders with a wall of fearless men, and peace slept everywhere in security among its green recesses. Stirring industry—the perpetual conqueror—made the woods resound with the echoes of his biting axe and ringing hammer. Smiling villages rose in cheerful white, in place of the crumbling and smoky cabins of the hunter. High and becoming purposes of social life and thoughtful enterprise superseded that eating and painful decay, which has terminated in the annihilation of the red man; and which, among every people, must always result from their refusal to exercise, according to the decree of experience, no less than Providence, their limbs and sinews in tasks of well-directed and continual labor.

A great nation urging on a sleepless war against sloth and feebleness, is one of the noblest of human spectacles. This warfare was rapidly and hourly changing the monotony and dreary aspects of rock and forest. Under the creative hands of art, temples of magnificence rose where the pines had fallen. Long and lovely vistas were opened through the dark and hitherto impervious thickets. The city sprang up beside the river, while hamlets, filled with active hope and cheerful industry, crowded upon the verdant hill-side, and clustered among innumerable valleys.

Grace began to seek out the homes of toil, and taste supplied their decorations. A purer form of religion hallowed the forest-homes of the red-man, while expelling for ever the rude divinities of his worship; and throughout the land, an advent of moral loveliness seemed approaching, not less grateful to the affections and the mind, than was the beauty of the infant April, to the eye and the heart of the wanderer.

But something was still wanting to complete the harmonies of nature, in the scene upon which we are about to enter. Though the savage had for ever departed from its limits, the blessings of a perfect civilization were not yet secured to the new and flourishing regions of Kentucky. Its morals were still in that fermenting condition which invariably distinguishes the settlement of every new country by a various and foreign people. At the distant period of which we write, the population of Kentucky had not yet become sufficiently stationary to have made their domestic gods secure, or to have fixed the proper lines and limits regulating social intercourse and attaching precise standards to human conduct. The habits and passions of the first settlers—those fearless pioneers who had struggled foot to foot with the Indian, and lived in a kindred state of barbarity with him, had not yet ceased to have influence over the numerous race which followed them. That moral amalgam which we call society, and which recognises a mutual and perfectly equal condition of dependence, and a common necessity, as the great cementing principles of the human family, had not yet taken place; and it was still too much the custom, in that otherwise lovely region, for the wild man to revenge his own wrong, and the strong man to commit a greater with impunity. The repose of social order was not yet secured to the great mass, covering with its wing, as with a sky that never knew a cloud, the sweet homes and secure possessions of the unwarlike. The fierce robber sometimes smote the peaceful traveller upon the

highway, and the wily assassin of reputation, within the limits of the city barrier, not unfrequently plucked the sweetest rose that ever adorned the virgin bosom of innocence, and triumphed, without censure, in the unhallowed spoliation.

But sometimes there came an avenger;—and the highway robber fell before the unexpected patriot; and the virgin was avenged by the yet beardless hero, for the wrong of her cruel seducer. The story which we have to tell, is of times and of actions such as these. It is a melancholy narrative—the more melancholy, as it is most certainly true. It will not be told in vain, if the crime which it describes in proper colors, and the vengeance by which it was followed, and which it equally records, shall secure the innocent from harm, and discourage the incipient wrongdoer from his base designs.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRAVELLERS.

LET the traveller stand with us on the top of this rugged eminence, and look down upon the scene below. Around us, the hills gather in groups on every side, a family cluster, each of which wears the same general likeness to that on which we stand, yet there is no monotony in their aspect. The axe has not yet deprived them of a single tree, and they rise up, covered with the honored growth of a thousand summers. But they seem not half so venerable. They wear, in this invigorating season, all the green, fresh features of youth and spring. The leaves cover the rugged limbs which sustain them, with so much ease and grace, as if for the first time they were so green and glossy, and as if the impression should be made more certain and complete, the gusty wind of March has scattered abroad and borne afar, all the yellow garments of the vanished winter. The wild flowers begin to flaunt their blue and crimson draperies about us, as if conscious that they are borne upon the bosom of undecaying beauty; and the spot so marked and hallowed by each charming variety of bud and blossom, would seem to have been a selected dwelling for the queenly Spring herself.

Man, mindful of those tastes and sensibilities which in great part constitute his claim to superiority over the brute, has not been indifferent to the beauties of the place. In the winding hollows of these hills, beginning at our feet, you see the first signs of as lovely a little hamlet as ever

promised peace to the weary and the discontent. This is the village of Charlemont.

A dozen snug and smiling cottages seem to have been dropped in this natural cup, as if by a spell of magic. They appear, each of them, to fill a fitted place—not equally distant from, but equally near each other. Though distinguished, each by an individual feature, there is yet no great dissimilarity among them. All are small, and none of them distinguished by architectural pretension. They are now quite as flourishing as when first built, and their number has had no increase since the village was first settled. Speculation has not made it populous and prosperous, by destroying its repose, stifling its charities, and abridging the sedate habits and comforts of its people. The houses, though constructed after the fashion of the country, of heavy and ill-squared logs, roughly hewn, and hastily thrown together, perhaps by unpractised hands, are yet made cheerful by that tidy industry which is always sure to make them comfortable also. Trim hedges that run beside slender white palings, surround and separate them from each other. Sometimes, as you see, festoons of graceful flowers, and waving blossoms, distinguish one dwelling from the rest, declaring its possession of some fair tenant, whose hand and fancy have kept equal progress with habitual industry; at the same time, some of them appear entirely without the little garden of flowers and vegetables, which glimmers and glitters in the rear or front of the greater number.

Such was Charlemont, at the date of our narrative. But the traveller would vainly look, now, to find the place as we describe it. The garden is no longer green with fruits and flowers—the festoons no longer grace the lowly portals—the white palings are down and blackening in the gloomy mould—the roofs have fallen, and silence dwells lonely among the ruins,—the only inhabitant of the place. It has no longer a human occupant.

“Something ails it now—the spot is cursed.”

Why this fate has fallen upon so sweet an abiding place—why the villagers should have deserted a spot, so quiet and so beautiful—it does not fall within our present purpose to inquire. It was most probably abandoned—not because of the unfruitfulness of the soil, or the unhealthiness of the climate—for but few places on the bosom of the earth, may be found either more fertile, more beautiful, or more healthful—but in compliance with that feverish restlessness of mood—that sleepless discontent of temper, which, perhaps, more than any other quality, is the moral failing in the character of the Anglo-American. The roving desires of his ancestor, which brought him across the waters, have been transmitted without diminution—nay, with large increase—to the son. The creatures of a new condition of things, and new necessities, our people will follow out their destiny. The restless energies which distinguish them, are, perhaps, the contemplated characteristics which Providence has assigned them, in order that they may the more effectually and soon, bring into the use and occupation of a yet mightier people, the wilderness of that new world in which their fortunes have been cast. Generation is but the pioneer of generation, and the children of millions, more gigantic and powerful than ourselves, shall yet smile to behold, how feeble was the stroke made by our axe upon the towering trees of their inheritance.

It was probably because of this characteristic of our people, that Charlemont came in time to be deserted. The inhabitants were one day surprised with tidings of more attractive regions in yet deeper forests, and grew dissatisfied with their beautiful and secluded valley. Such is the ready access to the American mind, in its excitable state, of novelty and sudden impulse, that there needs but few suggestions to persuade the forester to draw stakes, and remove his tents, where the signs seem to be more numerous of sweeter waters and more prolific fields. For a time, change has the power which nature does not often exer-

cise ; and under its freshness, the waters *do* seem sweeter, and the stores of the wilderness, the wild-honey and the locust, *do* seem more abundant to the lip and eye.

Where our cottagers went, and under what delusion, are utterly unknown to us ; nor is it important to our narrative that we should inquire. Our knowledge of them is only desirable, while they were in the flourishing condition in which they have been seen. It is our trust that the novelty which seduced them from their homes, did not fail them in its promises—that they may never have found, in all their wanderings, a less lovely abiding-place, than that which they abandoned. But change has its bitter, as well as its sweet, and the fear is strong that the cottagers of Charlemont, in the weary hours, when life's winter is approaching, will still and vainly sigh after the once-despised enjoyments of their deserted hamlet.

It was toward the close of one of those bright, tearful days in April, of which we have briefly spoken, when a couple of travellers on horseback, ascended the last hill looking down upon Charlemont. One of these travellers had passed the middle period of life ; the other was, perhaps, just about to enter upon its heavy responsibilities, and more active duties. The first wore the countenance of one who had borne many sorrows, and borne them with that resignation, which, while it proves the wisdom of the sufferer, is at the same time, calculated to increase his benevolence. The expression of his eye, was full of kindness and benignity, while that of his mouth, with equal force, was indicative of a melancholy, as constant as it was gentle and unobtrusive. A feeble smile played over his lips while he spoke, that increased the sadness which it softened ; as the faint glimmer of the evening sunlight, upon the yellow leaves of autumn, heightens the solemn tones in the rich coloring of the still decaying forest.

The face of his companion, in many of its features, was in direct contrast with his own. It was well formed, and,

to the casual glance, seemed no less handsome than intellectual. There was much in it to win the regard of the young and superficial. An eye that sparkled with fire, a mouth that glowed with animation—cheeks warmly colored, and a contour full of vivacity, seemed to denote properties of mind and heart equally valuable and attractive. Still, a keen observer would have found something sinister, in the upward glancing of the eye, at intervals, from the half-closed lids; and, at such moments, there was a curling contempt upon the lips, which seemed to denote a cynical and sarcastic turn of mind. A restless movement of the same features seemed equally significant of caprice of character, and a flexibility of moral; while the chin narrowed too suddenly and became too sharp at the extremity, to persuade a thorough physiognomist, that the owner could be either very noble in his aims, or very generous in his sentiments. But as these outward tokens can not well be considered authority in the work of judgment, let events, which speak for themselves, determine the true character of our travellers.

They had reached the table land of the heights which looked down upon Charlemont, at a moment when the beauty of the scene could scarcely fail to impress itself upon the most indifferent observer. The elder of the travellers, who happened to be in advance, was immediately arrested by it; and, staying the progress of his horse, with hand lifted above his eye, looked around him with a delight which expressed itself in an abrupt ejaculation, and brought his companion to his side. The sun had just reached that point in his descent, which enabled him to level a shaft of rosy light from the pinnacle of the opposite hill, into the valley below, where it rested among the roofs of two of the cottages, which arose directly in its path. The occupants of these two cottages had come forth, as it were, in answer to the summons; and old and young, to the number of ten or a dozen persons, had met, in the winding pathway be-

tween, which led through the valley, and in front of every cottage which it contained. The elder of the cottagers sat upon the huge trunk of a tree, which had been felled beside the road, for the greater convenience of the traveller; and with eyes turned in the direction of the hill on which the sunlight had sunk and appeared to slumber, seemed to enjoy the vision with no less pleasure than our senior traveller. Two tall damsels of sixteen, accompanied by a young man something older, were strolling off in the direction of the woods; while five or six chubby girls and boys were making the echoes leap and dance along the hills, in the clamorous delight which they felt in their innocent but stirring exercises. The whole scene was warmed with the equal brightness of the natural and the human sun. Beauty was in the sky, and its semblance, at least, was on the earth. God was in the heavens, and in his presence could there be other than peace and harmony among men!

“How beautiful!” exclaimed the elder of our travellers — “could anything be more so! How pure, how peaceful! See, Warham, how soft, how spirit-like, that light lies along the hill-side, and how distinct, yet how delicate, is the train which glides from it down the valley, even to the white dwellings at its bottom, from which it seems to shrink and tremble as if half conscious of intrusion. And yet the picture below is kindred with it. That, now, is a scene that I delight in — it is a constant picture in my mind. There is peace in that valley, if there be peace anywhere on earth. The old men sit before the door, and contemplate with mingled feelings of pride and pleasure, the vigorous growth of their children. They behold in them their own immortality, even upon earth. The young will preserve their memories, and transmit their names to other children yet unborn; and how must such a reflection reconcile them to their own time of departure, not unfitly shown in the last smiles of that sunlight, which they are so soon about to lose. Like him, they look with benevolence

and love upon the world from which they will soon depart."

"Take my word for it, uncle, they will postpone their departure to the last possible moment, and, so far from looking with smiles upon what they are about to leave for ever, they will leave it with very great reluctance, and in monstrous bad humor. As for regarding their children with any such notions as those you dwell upon with such poetical raptures, they will infinitely prefer transmitting for themselves their names and qualities to the very end of the chapter. Ask any one of them the question now, and he will tell you that an immortality, each, in his own wig-wam, and with his weight of years and infirmity upon him, would satisfy all his expectations. If they look at the vigor of their young, it is to recollect that they themselves once were so, and to repine at the recollection. Take my word for it, there is not a dad among them, that does not envy his own son the excellence of his limbs, and the long time of exercise and enjoyment which they seemingly assure him."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the elder of the two travellers. "Impossible! I should be sorry to think as you do. But you, Warham, can not understand these things. You are an habitual unbeliever—the most unfortunate of all mankind."

"The most fortunate, rather. I have but few burdens of credulity to carry. The stars be blessed, my articles of faith are neither very many nor very cumbrous. I should be sorry if my clients were so few."

"I should be sorry, Warham, if I had so little feeling as yourself."

"And I should be still more sorry, uncle, if I had half so much. Why, sir, yours is in such excess, that you continually mistake the joys and sorrows of other people for your own. You laugh and weep with them alternately; and, until all's done and over, you never seem to discover

that the business was none of yours;—that you had none of the pleasure which made you laugh, and might have been spared all the unnecessary suffering which moved your tears. 'Pon my soul, sir, you pass a most unprofitable life."

"You mistake, Warham, I have shared both; and my profits have been equally great from both sources. My susceptibility has been an exceeding great gain to me, and has quickened all my senses. There is a joy of grief, you know, according to Ossian."

"Nay, if you quote Ossian, uncle, I give you up. I don't believe in Ossian, and his raving stuff always sickens me."

"I sometimes think, Warham," said the uncle, good naturedly, "that Providence has denied you some of the more human faculties. Nay, I fear that you are partially deficient in some of the senses. Do you see that sunlight to which I point—there, on the hill-side, a sort of rosy haze, which seems to me eminently beautiful?"

"Yes, sir; and, if you will suffer me, I will get out of its reach as quickly as possible. I have been half blinded by it ever since you found it so beautiful. Sunlight is, I think, of very little importance to professional men, unless as a substitute for candles, and then it should come over the left shoulder, if you would not have it endanger the sight. Nay, I will go farther, and confess that it is better than candlelight, and certainly far less expensive. Shall we go forward, sir?"

"Warham," said the uncle, with increasing gravity, "I should be sorry to believe that a habit of speech so irreverential, springs from anything but an ambition for saying smart things, and strange things, which are not always smart. It would give me great pain to think that you were devoid of any of those sensibilities which soften the hearts of other men, and lead them to generous impulses."

"Nay, be not harsh, uncle. You should know me better. I trust my sensibilities, and senses too, may be sufficient

for all proper purposes, when the proper time comes for their employment; but I can't flame up at every sunbeam, and grow enthusiastic in the contemplation of Bill Johnson's cottage, and Richard Higgins's hedgerow. A turnip-patch never yet could waken my enthusiasm, and I do believe, sir—I confess it with some shame and a slight misgiving, lest my admissions should give you pain—that my fancy has never been half so greatly enkindled by Carthula, of the bending spear, or Morven of the winds, as by the sedate and homely aspect of an ordinary dish of eggs and bacon, hot from the flaming frying-pan of some worthy housewife."

The uncle simply looked upon the speaker, but without answering. He was probably quite too much accustomed to his modes of thought and speech to be so much surprised as annoyed by what he said. Perhaps, too, his own benevolence of spirit interfered to save the nephew from that harsher rebuke which his judgment might yet have very well disposed him to bestow.

Following the course of the latter in silence, he descended into the valley, and soon made his way among the sweet little cottages at its foot. An interchange of courtesies between the travellers and the villagers whose presence had given occasion to some portion of the previous dialogue, in which the manner of the younger traveller was civil, and that of the elder kind; and the two continued on their journey, though not without being compelled to refuse sundry invitations, given with true patriarchal hospitality, to remain among the quiet abodes through which they passed.

As cottage after cottage unfolded itself to their eyes, along the winding avenue, the proprietors appeared at door and window, and, with the simple freedoms of rural life, welcomed the strangers with a smile, a nod, and sometimes, when sufficiently nigh, a friendly word of salutation, but

without having the effect of arresting their onward progress. Yet many a backward glance was sent by the elder of the travellers, whose eyes, beaming with satisfaction, sufficiently declared the delight which he received from the contemplation of so many of the mingled graces of physical and moral nature. His loitering steps drew from his young companion an occasional remark, which, to ears less benevolent and unsuspecting than those of the senior, might have been deemed a sarcasm; and more than once the lips of the nephew had curled with contemptuous smiles, as he watched the yearning glances of his uncle on each side of the avenue, as they wended slowly through it.

At the end of the village, and at the foot of the opposite hills, they encountered a group of young people of both sexes, whose bursts of merriment were suddenly restrained as they emerged unexpectedly into sight. The girls had been sitting upon the grassy mead, with the young men before them; but they started to their feet at the sound of strange steps, and the look of strange faces. Charlemont, it must be remembered, was not in the thoroughfare of common travel. If visited at all by strangers, it was most usually by those only who came with a single purpose. Nothing, therefore could have been more calculated to surprise a community so insulated, than that they should attract, but not arrest the traveller. The natural surprise which the young people felt, when unexpectedly encountered in their rustic sports, was naturally increased by this unusual circumstance, and they looked after the departing forms of the wayfarers with a wonder and curiosity that kept them for some time silent. The elder of the two, meanwhile—one of whose habits of mind was always to give instantaneous utterance to the feeling which was uppermost—dilated, without heeding the sneers of his nephew, upon the apparent happiness which they witnessed.

“Here, you see, Warham, is a pleasure which the great city never knows:—the free intercourse of the sexes in all

those natural exercises which give health to the body, grace to the movement, and vivacity to the manners.”

“The health will do well enough,” replied the skeptic, “but save me from the grace of Hob and Hinney; and as for their manners—did I hear you correctly, uncle, when you spoke of their manners?”

“Surely, you did. I have always regarded the natural manners which belong to the life of the forester, as being infinitely more noble, as well as more graceful, than those of the citizen. Where did you ever see a tradesman whose bearing was not mean compared with that of the hunter?”

“Ay, but these are no hunters, and scarcely foresters. I see not a single Nimrod among the lads; and as for the lasses, even your eyes, indulgent as they usually are, will scarcely venture to insist that I shall behold one nymph among them worthy to tie the shoe-latchets of Diana. The manners of the hunter are those of an elastic savage; but these lads shear sheep, raise hogs for the slaughter-pen, and seldom perform a nobler feat than felling a bullock. They have none of the elasticity which, coupled with strength, makes the grace of the man; and they walk as if perpetually in the faith that their corn-rows and potato-hills were between their legs.”

“Did you note the young woman in the crimson body Warham? Was she not majestically made?”

“It struck me she would weigh against any two of the company.”

“She is rather heavy, I grant you, but her carriage, Warham!”

“Would carry weight—nothing more.”

“There was one little girl, just rising into womanhood;—you must admit that she had a very lovely face, and her form—”

“My dear uncle, what is it that you will not desire me to believe? You are sadly given to proselytism, and take

infinite pains to compel me to see with eyes that never do their owner so much wrong, as when they reject the aid of spectacles. How much would Charlemont and its inhabitants differ to your sight, were you only to take your green spectacles from the shagreen case in which they do no duty. But if you are resolved, in order to seem youthful, to let your age go unprovided with the means of seeing as youth would see, at least suffer me to enjoy the natural privileges of twenty-five. When, like you, my hairs whiten, and my eyes grow feeble, ten to one, I shall think with you that every third woodman is an Apollo, and every other peasant-girl is a Venus, whom——”

The words of the speaker ceased—cut short by the sudden appearance of a form and face, the beauty and dignity of which silenced the skeptic, and made him doubtful, for the moment, whether he had not in reality reached that period of confused and confounding vision, which, as he alleged to be the case with his uncle, loses all power of discrimination. A maiden stood before him—tall, erect, majestic—beautiful after no ordinary standard of beauty. She was a brunette, with large dark eyes, which, though bright, seemed dark with excess of bright—and had a depth of expression which thrilled instantly through the bosom of the spectator. A single glance did she bestow upon the travellers, while she acknowledged, by a slight courtesy, the respectful bow which they made her. They drew up their horses as with mutual instinct, but she passed them quickly, courtesying a second time as she did so, and, in another moment a turn of the road concealed her from the eyes of the travellers.

“What say you to that, Warham?” demanded the senior exultingly.

“A Diana, in truth; but, uncle, we find her not among the rest. *She* is none of your cottagers. *She* is of another world and element. She is no Charlemonter.”

And, as he spoke, the younger traveller looked back with

straining eyes to catch another glance of the vanished object, but in vain.

"You deserve never to see a lovely woman again, Warham, for your skepticism."

"But I will have a second look at her, uncle, though the skies fall," answered the young man, as, wheeling his horse round, he deliberately galloped back to the bend in the avenue, by which she had been hidden from his view.

He had scarcely reached the desired point, when he suddenly recoiled to find the object of his pursuit standing motionless just beyond, with eyes averted to the backward path—her glance consequently encountering his own, the very moment when he discovered her. A deep crimson, visible even where he stood, suffused her cheeks when she beheld him; and without acknowledging the second bow which the traveller made, she somewhat haughtily averted her head with a suddenness which shook her long and raven tresses entirely free of the net-work which confined them.

"A proud gipsy!" muttered the youth as he rode back to his uncle—"just such a spirit as I should like to tame." He took especial care, however, that this sentiment did not reach the ears of his senior.

"Well?" said the latter, inquiringly, at his approach.

"I am right after all, uncle:—the wench is no better than the rest. A heavy bulk that seemed dignified only because she is too fat for levity. She walks like a blind plough-horse in a broken pasture, up and down, over and over; with a gait as rigid and deliberate as if she trod among the hot cinders, and had corns on all her toes. She took us so by surprise that if we had not thought her beautiful we must have thought her ugly, and the chances are equal, that, on a second meeting, we shall both think her so. I shall, I'm certain, and you must, provided you give your eyes the benefit, and your nose the burden of your green specs."

"Impossible! I can scarce believe it, Warham," replied the senior. "I thought her very beautiful."

"I shall never rely on your judgment again;—nay, uncle, I am almost inclined to suspect your taste."

"Well, let them be beautiful or ugly, still I should think the same of the beauty of this village."

"While the sun shines it may be tolerable; but, uncle, in wet bad weather—it must become a mere pond, it lies so completely in the hollow of the hills."

"There is reason in that, Warham."

"And yet, even as a pond, it would have its advantages—it would be famous for duck-raising."

"Pshaw! you are worse than a Mahometan."

"Something of a just comparison, uncle, though scarcely aimed," said the other; "like Mahomet, you know, I doubt the possession of souls by women."

"Yet if these of Charlemont have not souls, they have no small share of happiness on earth. I never heard more happy laughter from human lips than from theirs. They must be happy."

"I doubt that also," was the reply. "See you not, uncle, that to nine or ten women there are but three lads? Where the disproportion is so great among the sexes, and where it is so unfavorable to the weaker, women never can be happy. Their whole lives will be lives of turmoil, jealousy, and pulling of caps. Nay, eyes shall not be secure under such circumstances; and Nan's fingers shall be in Doll's hair, and Doll's claws in Nanny's cheeks, whenever it shall so happen, that Tom Jenkins shall incline to Nan, or John Dobbins to Doll. Such a disparity between the sexes is one of the most fruitful causes of domestic war."

"Warham, where do you think to go when you die?"

"Where there shall be no great inequality in the population. Believe me, uncle, though I am sometimes disposed to think with Mahomet, and deny the possession of

souls to the sex, I also incline to believe, with other more charitable teachers — however difficult it may be to reconcile the two philosophies — that there will be no lack of them in either world.”

“Hush, hush, Warham,” was the mild rebuke of the senior; “you go too far — you are irreverent. As for this maiden, I still think her very beautiful — of a high and noble kind of beauty. My eyes may be bad; — indeed I am willing to admit they are none of the best; but I feel certain that they cannot so far deceive me, when we consider how nigh we were to her.”

“The matter deserves inquiry, uncle, if it were only to satisfy your faith; — suppose we ride back, both of us, and see for ourselves — closely, and with the aid of the green spectacles? Not that I care to see farther — not that I have any doubts — but I wish you to be convinced in this case, if only to make you sensible of the frequent injustice to which your indulgence of judgment, subjects the critical fastidiousness of mine. What say you; shall we wheel about?”

“Why, you are mad, surely. It is now sunset, and we have a good eight miles before we get to Holme’s Station.”

“But we can sleep in Charlemont to-night. A night in this earthly Eden——”

“And run the risk of losing our company? Oh, no, most worthy nephew. They will start at dawn to-morrow.”

“We can soon come up with ’em.”

“Perhaps not, and the risk is considerable. Travelling to the Mississippi is no such small matter at any time, and, in these times it is only with a multitude, that there is safety. The murder of old Whiteford, is a sufficient warning not to go alone with more gold than lead in one’s pocket. We are two, it is true, but better ten than two. You are a brave fellow enough, Warham, I doubt not; but a shot will dispose of you, and after that I should be an easy vic-

tim. I could wink and hold out my iron as well as the best of you, but I prefer to escape the necessity. Let us mend our pace. We are burning daylight."

The nephew, with an air of some impatience, which, however, escaped the eyes of the senior, sent his horse forward by a sharp application of his spur, though looking back the while, with a glance of reluctance, which strongly disagreed with the sentiments which he expressed. Indeed, with both the travellers, the impression made by the little village of Charlemont was such that the subject seemed nowise displeasing to either, and furnished the chief staple of conversation between them, as they rode the remaining eight miles of their journey. The old man's heart had been subdued and won by the sweet air of peace which seemed to overspread and hallow the soft landscape, and the smiling cottages which made it human. The laughing maidens with their bright eyes and cheering accents, gave vivacity to its milder charms. We have heard from the lips of the younger traveller, that these attractions had failed to captivate his fancy. We may believe of this as we please. It is very probable that he had, in considerable part, spoken nothing but the truth. He was too much of a mocker;—one of those worldlings who derive their pleasures from circumstances of higher conventional attraction. He had no feeling for natural romance. His *penchant*, was decidedly for the artificial existence of city life; and the sneers which he had been heard to express at the humble joys of rustic life, its tastes, and characteristics, were, in truth, only such as he really felt. But, even in his case, there was an evident disposition to know something more of Charlemont. He was really willing to return. He renewed the same subject of conversation, when it happened to flag, with obvious eagerness; and, though his language was still studiously disparaging, a more deeply penetrating judgment than that of his uncle, would have seen that the little village, slightly as he professed to esteem it, was yet an object of thought

and interest in his eyes. Of the sources of this new interest time must inform us.

“Well, well, Warham,” at length exclaimed the uncle, in a tone that seemed meant to close the discussion of a topic which his nephew now appeared mischievously bent to thrust upon him, “you will return to Kentucky in the fall. Take Charlemont in your route. Stop a week there. It will do you no harm. Possibly you may procure some clients—may, indeed, include it in your tour of practice—at all events, you will not be unprofitably employed if you come to see the village and the people with *my* eyes, which, I doubt not, you will in time.”

“In time, perhaps, I may. It is well that you do not insist upon any hurried convictions. Were I at your years, uncle mine,” continued the other irreverently, “I should no doubt see with your eyes, and possibly feel with your desires. Then, no doubt, I shall acquire a taste for warmingpans and nightcaps—shall look for landscapes rather than lands—shall see nothing but innocence among the young, and resignation and religion among the old; and fancy, in every aged pair of bumpkins that I see, a Darby and Joan, with perpetual peace at their fireside, though they may both happen to lie there drunk on apple-brandy. Between caudle-cups and ‘John Anderson, my Jo-John,’ it is my hope to pass the evening of my days with a tolerable grace, and leave behind me some comely representatives, who shall take up the burden of the ditty where I leave off. On this head be sure you shall have no cause to complain of me. I shall be no Malthusian, as you certainly have shown yourself. It is the strangest thing to me, uncle, that, with all your *spoken* rapture for the sex, you should never have thought of securing for yourself at least one among the crowd which you so indiscriminately admire. Surely, a gentleman of your personal attractions—attractions which seem resolute to cling to you to the last—could not have found much difficulty in procuring the damsel he

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desired! And when, too, your enthusiasm for the sex is known, one would think it only necessary that you should fling your handkerchief, to have it greedily grappled by the fairest of the herd. How is it, uncle—how have you escaped from them—from yourself?”

“Pshaw, Warham, you are a fool!” exclaimed the senior, riding forward with increasing speed. The words were spoken good naturedly, but the youth had touched a spot, scarcely yet thoroughly scarred over, in the old man’s bosom: and memories, not less painful because they had been hidden so long, were instantly wakened into fresh and cruel activity.

It will not diminish the offence of the nephew in the mind of the reader, when he is told that the youth was not ignorant of the particular tenderness of his relative in this respect. The gentle nature of the latter, alone, rescued him from the well-merited reproach of suffering his habitual levity of mood to prevail in reference to one whom even he himself was disposed to honor. But few words passed between the two, ere they reached the place of appointment. The careless reference of the youth had made the thoughts of the senior active at the expense of his observation. His eyes were now turned inward; and the landscape, and the evening sun, which streamed over and hallowed it with a tender beauty to the last, was as completely hidden from his vision, as if a veil had been drawn above his sight. The retrospect, indeed, is ever the old man’s landscape; and perhaps, even had he not been so unkindly driven back to its survey, our aged traveller would have been reminded of the past in the momentarily-deepening shadows which the evening gathered around his path. Twilight is the cherished season for sad memories, even as the midnight is supposed to be that of guilty ghosts; and nothing, surely, can be more fitting than that the shadows of former hopes should revisit us in those hours when the face of nature itself seems darkening into gloom.

It was night before the wayfarers reached the appointed baiting place. There they found their company—a sort of little caravan, such as is frequent in the history of western emigration—already assembled, and the supper awaiting them. Let us leave them to its enjoyment, and return once more to the village of Charlemont.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRONG-MINDED WOMAN.

THE young maiden last met by our travellers, and whose appearance had so favorably impressed them, had not been altogether uninfluenced by the encounter. Her spirit was of a musing and perhaps somewhat moody character, and the little adventure related in our last chapter, had awakened in her mind a train of vague and purposeless thought, from which she did not strive to disengage herself. She ceased to pursue the direct path back to Charlemont, the moment she had persuaded herself that the strangers had continued on their way; and turning from the beaten track, she strolled aside, following the route of a brooklet, the windings of which, as it led her forward, were completely hidden from the intrusive glance of any casual wayfarer. The prattle of the little stream as it wound upon its sleepless journey, contributed still more to strengthen the musings of those vagrant fancies that filled the maiden's thoughts.

She sat down upon the prostrate trunk of a tree, and surrendered herself for a while to their control. Her thoughts were probably of a kind which, to a certain extent, are commended to every maiden. Among them, perpetually rose an image of the bold and handsome stranger, whose impudence, in turning back in pursuit of her, was somewhat qualified by the complimentary curiosity which such conduct manifested. Predominant even over this image, however, was the conviction of isolation which she felt where she was, and the still more painful conviction, that the

future was without promise. Such thoughts and apprehensions may be natural enough to all young persons of active, earnest nature, not permitted to perform; but in the bosom of Margaret Cooper they were particularly so. Her mind was of a masculine and commanding character, and was dissatisfied with her position and prospect in Charlemont. A quiet, obscure village, such as that we have described, held forth no promise for a spirit so proud, impatient, and ambitious as hers. She knew the whole extent of knowledge which it contained, and all its acquisitions and resources—she had sounded its depths, and traced all its shallows. The young women kept no pace with her own progress—they were good, silly girls enough—a chattering, playful set, whom small sports could easily satisfy, and who seemed to have no care, and scarce a hope, beyond the hilly limits of their homestead; and as for the young men—they were only suited to the girls, such as they were, and could never meet the demand of such an intellect as hers.

This lofty self-estimate, which was in some sense just, necessarily gave a tone to her language and a coloring to all her thoughts, such as good sense and amiability should equally strive to suppress and conceal—unless, as in the case of Margaret Cooper, the individual herself was without due consciousness of their presence. It had the effect of discouraging and driving from her side many a good-natured damsel, who would have loved to condole with her, and might have been a pleasant companion. The young women regarded her with some dislike in consequence of her self-imposed isolation—and the young men with some apprehension. Her very knowledge of books, which infinitely surpassed that of all her sex within the limits of Charlemont, was also an object of some alarm. It had been her fortune, whether well or ill may be a question, to inherit from her father a collection, not well chosen, upon which her mind had preyed with an appetite as insatiate as it was indiscriminating. They had taught her manv

things, but among these neither wisdom nor patience was included;—and one of the worst lessons which she had learned, and which they had contributed in some respects to teach, was discontent with her condition—a discontent which saddened, if it did not embitter, her present life, while it left the aspects of the future painfully doubtful, even to her own eye.

She was fatherless, and had been already taught some of those rude lessons which painfully teach dependence; but such lessons, which to most others would have brought submission, only provoked her to resistance. Her natural impetuosity of disposition, strengthened by her mother's idolatrous indulgence, increased the haughtiness of her character; and when, to these influences, we add that her surviving parent was poor, and suffered from privations which were unfelt by many of their neighbors, it may be easily conceived that a temper and mind such as we have described those of Margaret Cooper—ardent, commanding, and impatient—hourly found occasion, even in the secluded village where she dwelt, for the exercise of moods equally adverse to propriety and happiness. Isolated from the world by circumstances, she doubly exiled herself from its social indulgences, by the tyrannical sway of a superior will, strengthened and stimulated by an excitable and ever feverish blood; and, as we find her now, wandering sad and sternly by the brookside, afar from the sports and humbler sources of happiness, which gentler moods left open to the rest, so might she customarily be found, at all hours, when it was not absolutely due to appearances that she should be seen among the crowd.

We will not now seek to pursue her musings and trace them out to their conclusions, nor will it be necessary that we should do more than indicate their character. That they were sad and solemn as usual—perhaps humbling—may be gathered from the fact that a big tear might have been seen, long gathering in her eye;—the next moment

she brushed off the intruder with an impatience of gesture, that plainly showed how much her proud spirit resented any such intrusion. The tear dispersed the images which had filled her contemplative mood, and rising from her sylvan seat, she prepared to move forward, when a voice calling at some little distance, drew her attention. Giving a hasty glance in the direction of the sound, she beheld a young man making his way through the woods, and approaching her with rapid footsteps. His evident desire to reach her, did not, however, prompt her to any pause in her own progress; but, as if satisfied with the single glance which she gave him, and indifferent utterly to his object, she continued on her way, nor stopped for an instant, nor again looked back, until his salutation, immediately behind her, compelled her attention and answer.

“Margaret — Miss Cooper!” said the speaker, who was a young rustic, probably twenty or twenty-one years of age, of tall, good person, a handsome face, which was smooth, though of dark complexion, and lightened by an eye of more than ordinary size and intelligence. His tones were those of one whose sensibilities were fine and active, and it would not have called for much keen observation to have seen that his manner, in approaching and addressing the maiden, was marked with some little trepidation. She, on the contrary, seemed too familiar with his homage, or too well satisfied of his inferiority, to deign much attention to his advances. She answered his salutation coldly, and was preparing to move forward, when his words again called for her reluctant notice.

“I have looked for you, Margaret, full an hour. Mother sent me after you to beg that you will come there this evening. Old Jènks has come up from the river, and brought a store of fine things — there’s a fiddle for Ned, and Jason Lightner has a flute, and I — I have a small lot of books, Margaret, that I think will please you.”

"I thank you, William Hinkley, and thank your mother, but I can not come this evening."

"But why not, Margaret? — your mother's coming — she promised for you too, but I thought you might not get home soon enough to see her, and so I came out to seek you."

"I am very sorry you took so much trouble, William, for I can not come this evening."

"But why not, Margaret? You have no other promise to go elsewhere have you?"

"None," was the indifferent reply.

"Then — but, perhaps, you are not well, Margaret?"

"I am quite well, I thank you, William Hinkley, but I don't feel like going out this evening. I am not in the humor."

Already, in the little village of Charlemont, Margaret Cooper was one of the few who were permitted to indulge in humors, and William Hinkley learned the reason assigned for her refusal, with an expression of regret and disappointment, if not of reproach. An estoppel, which would have been so conclusive in the case of a city courtier, was not sufficient, however, to satisfy the more frank and direct rustic, and he proceeded with some new suggestions, in the hope to change her determination.

"But you'll be so lonesome at home, Margaret, when your mother's with us. She'll be gone before you can get back, and——"

"I'm never lonesome, William, at least I'm never so well content or so happy as when I'm alone," was the self-satisfactory reply.

"But that's so strange, Margaret. It's so strange that you should be different from everybody else. I often wonder at it, Margaret; for I know none of the other girls but love to be where there's a fiddle, and where there's pleasant company. It's so pleasant to be where everybody's pleased; and then, Margaret, where one can talk so

well as you, and of so many subjects, it's a greater wonder still that you should not like to be among the rest."

"I do not, however, William," was the answer in more softened tones. There was something in this speech of her lover, that found its way through the only accessible avenues of her nature. It was a truth, which she often repeated to herself with congratulatory pride, that she had few feelings or desires in common with the crowd.

"It is my misfortune," she continued, "to care very little for the pastimes you speak of; and as for the company, I've no doubt it will be very pleasant for those who go, but to me it will afford very little pleasure. Your mother must therefore excuse me, William:—I should be a very dull person among the rest."

"She will be so very sorry, Margaret — and Ned, whose new fiddle has just come, and Jason Lightner, with his flute. They all spoke of you and look for you above all, to hear them this evening. They will be so disappointed."

William Hinkley spoke nothing of his own disappointment, but it was visible enough in his blank countenance, and sufficiently audible in the undisguised faltering of his accents.

"I do not think they will be so much disappointed, William Hinkley. They have no reason to be, as they have no right to look for me in particular. I have very little acquaintance with the young men you speak of."

"Why, Margaret, they live alongside of you — and I'm sure you've met them a thousand times in company," was the response of the youth, uttered in tones more earnest than any he had yet employed in the dialogue, and with something of surprise in his accents.

"Perhaps so; but that makes them no intimates of mine, William Hinkley. They may be very good young men, and, indeed, so far as I know, they really are; but that makes no difference. We find our acquaintances and our intimates among those who are congenial, who somewhat resemble us in spirit, feeling, and understanding."

“Ah, Margaret!” said her rustic companion with a sigh, which amply testified to the humility of his own self-estimate, and of the decline of his hope which came with it — “ah, Margaret, if that be the rule, where are you going to find friends and intimates in Charlemont?”

“Where!” was the single word spoken by the haughty maiden, as her eye wandered off to the cold tops of the distant hills along which the latest rays of falling sunlight, faint and failing, as they fell, imparted a hue, which though bright, still as it failed to warm, left an expression of October sadness to the scene, that fitly harmonized with the chilling mood under which she had spoken throughout the interview.

“I don’t think, Margaret,” continued the lover, finding courage as he continued, “that such a rule is a good one. I know it can’t be a good one for happiness. There’s many a person that never will meet his or her match in this world, in learning and understanding — and if they won’t look on other persons with kindness, because they are not altogether equal to them, why there’s a chance that they’ll always be solitary and sad. It’s a real blessing, I believe, to have great sense, but I don’t see, that because one has great sense, that one should not think well and kindly of those who have little, provided they be good, and are willing to be friendly. Now, a good heart seems to be the very best thing that nature can give us; and I know, Margaret, that there’s no two better hearts in all Charlemont — perhaps in all the world, though I won’t say that — than cousin Ned Hinkley, and Jason Lightner, and——”

“I don’t deny their merits and their virtues, and their goodness of heart, William Hinkley,” was the answer of the maiden — “I only say that the possession of these qualities gives them no right to claim my sympathies or affection. These claims are only founded upon congeniality of character and mind, and without this congeniality, there can be no proper, no lasting intimacy between persons. They no

doubt, will find friends between whom and themselves, this congeniality exists. I, on the other hand, must be permitted to find mine, after my own ideas, and as I best can. But if I do not — the want of them gives me no great concern. I find company enough, and friends enough, even in these woods, to satisfy the desires of my heart at present; I am not anxious to extend my acquaintance or increase the number of my intimates.”

William Hinkley, who had become somewhat warmed by the argument, could have pursued the discussion somewhat further; but the tones and manner of his companion, to say nothing of her words, counselled him to forbear. Still, he was not disposed altogether to give up his attempts to secure her presence for the evening party.

“But if you don’t come for the company, Margaret, recollect the music. Even if Ned Hinkley was a perfect fool, which he is not, and Jason Lightner were no better, — nobody can say that they are not good musicians. Old Squire Bee says there’s not in all Kentucky a better violinist than Ned, and Jason’s flute is the sweetest sound that ear ever listened to along these hills. If you don’t care anything for the players, Margaret, I’m sure you can’t be indifferent to their music; and I know they are anything but indifferent to what you may think about it. They will play ten times as well if you are there; and I’m sure, Margaret, I shall be the last” — here the tone of the speaker’s voice audibly faltered — “I shall be the very last to think it sweet if you are not there.”

But the words and faltering accents of the lover equally failed in subduing the inflexible, perverse mood of the haughty maiden. Her cold denial was repeated; and with looks that did not fail to speak the disappointment of William Hinkley, he attended her back to the village. Their progress was marked by coldness on the one hand, and decided sadness on the other. The conversation was carried on in monosyllables only, on the part of Margaret, while

timidity and a painful hesitancy marked the language of her attendant. But a single passage may be remembered of all that was said between the two, ere they separated at the door of the widow Cooper.

“Did you see the two strangers, Margaret, that passed through Charlemont this afternoon?”

The cheeks of the maiden became instantly flushed, and the rapid utterance of her reply in the affirmative, denoted an emotion which the jealous instincts of the lover readily perceived. A cold chill, on the instant, pervaded the veins of the youth; and that night he did not hear, any more than Margaret Cooper, the music of his friends. He was present all the time and he answered their inquiries as usual; but his thoughts were very far distant, and somehow or other, they perpetually mingled up the image of the young traveller, whom he too had seen, with that of the proud woman, whom he was not yet sure that he unprofitably worshipped.

CHAPTER IV.

SIMPLICITY AND THE SERPENT.

THE mirth and music of Charlemont were enjoyed by others, but not by Margaret Cooper. The resolution not to share in the pleasures of the young around her, which she showed to her rustic lover, was a resolution firmly persevered in throughout the long summer which followed. Her wayward mood shut out from her contemplation the only sunshine of the place; and her heart, brooding over the remote, if not the impossible, denied itself those joys which were equally available and nigh. Her lonesome walks became longer in the forests, and later each evening grew the hour of her return to the village. Her solitude daily increased, as the youth who really loved her with all the ardency of a first passion, and who regarded her at the same time with no little veneration for those superior gifts of mind and education which, it was the general conviction in Charlemont, that she possessed, became, at length, discouraged in a pursuit which hitherto had found nothing but coldness and repulse. Not that he ceased to love — nay, he did not cease entirely to hope. What lover ever did? He fondly ascribed to the object of his affections a waywardness of humor, which he fancied would pass away after a season, and leave her mind to the influence of a more sober and wholesome judgment. Perhaps, too, like many other youth in like circumstances, he did not always see or feel the caprice of which he was the

victim. But for this fortunate blindness, many a fair damsel would lose her conquest quite as suddenly as it was made.

But the summer passed away, and the forest put on the sere and sombre robes of autumn, and yet no visible change — none at least more favorable to the wishes of William Hinkley — took place in the character and conduct of the maiden. Her mind, on the contrary, seemed to take something of its hue from the cold sad tones of the forest. The serious depth of expression in her dark eyes seemed to deepen yet more, and become yet more concentrated — their glance acquired a yet keener intentness — an inflexibility of direction — which suffered them seldom to turn aside from those moody contemplations, which had made her, for a long time, infinitely prefer to gaze upon the rocks, and woods, and waters, than upon the warm and wooing features of humanity.

At distance the youth watched and sometimes followed her, and when, with occasional boldness, he would draw nigh to her secret wanderings, a cold fear filled his heart, and he shrunk back with all the doubt and dread of some guilty trespasser. But his doubt, and we may add, his dread also, was soon to cease entirely, in the complete conviction of his hopelessness. The day and the fate were approaching, in the person of one, to whom a natural instinct had already taught him to look with apprehension, and whose very first appearance had inspired him with antipathy.

What a strange prescience, in some respects, has the devoted and watchful heart that loves! William Hinkley, had seen but for a single instant, the face of that young traveller, who has already been introduced to us, and that instant was enough to awaken his dislike — nay, more, his hostility. Yet no villager in Charlemont but would have told you, that, of all the village, William Hinkley was the most gentle, the most generous — the very last to be moved by bad passions, by jealousy or hate.

The youth whom we have seen going down with his uncle to the great valley of the Mississippi, was now upon his return. He was now unaccompanied by the benignant senior with whom we first made his acquaintance. He had simply attended the old bachelor, from whom he had considerable expectations, to his plantation, in requital of the spring visit which the latter had paid to his relatives in Kentucky; and having spent the summer in the southwest, was about to resume his residence, and the profession of the law, in that state. We have seen that, however he might have succeeded in disguising his true feelings from his uncle, he was not unmoved by the encounter with Margaret Cooper, on the edge of the village. He now remembered the casual suggestion of the senior, which concluded their discussion on the subject of her beauty; and he resolved to go aside from his direct path, and take Charlemont in the route of his return. Not that he himself needed a second glance to convince him of that loveliness which, in his wilfulness, he yet denied. He was free to acknowledge to himself that Margaret Cooper was one of the noblest and most impressive beauties he had ever seen. The very scorn that spoke in all her features, the imperious fires that kindled in her eyes, were better calculated than any more gentle expressions, to impose upon one who was apt to be skeptical on the subject of ordinary beauties. The confidence and consciousness of superiority, which too plainly spoke out in the features of Margaret, seemed to deny to his mind the privilege of doubting or discussing her charms—a privilege upon which no one could have been more apt to insist than himself. This seeming denial, while it suggested to him ideas of novelty, provoked his curiosity and kindled his pride. The haughty glance with which she encountered his second approach, aroused his vanity, and a latent desire arose in his heart, to overcome one who had shown herself so premature in her defiance. We will not venture to assert that the young traveller had

formed any very deliberate designs of conquest, but, it may be said, as well here as elsewhere, that his self-esteem was great; and accustomed to easy conquests among the sex, in the region where he dwelt, it was only necessary to inflame his vanity, to stimulate him to the exercise of all his arts.

It was about noon, on one of those bright, balmy days, early in October, when "the bridal of the earth and sky," in the language of the good old Herbert, is going on—when, the summer heats subdued, there is yet nothing either cold, or repulsive in the atmosphere; and the soft breathing from the southwest has just power enough to stir the flowers and disperse their scents; that our young traveller was joined in his progress towards Charlemont, by a person mounted like himself and pursuing a similar direction.

At the first glance the youth distinguished him as one of the homely forest preachers of the methodist persuasion, who are the chief agents and pioneers of religion in most of the western woods. His plain, unstudied garments all of black, rigid and unfashionable; his pale, demure features, and the general humility of his air and gesture, left our young skeptic little reason to doubt of this; and when the other expressed his satisfaction at meeting with a companion at last, after a long and weary ride without one, the tone of his expressions, the use of biblical phraseology, and the monotonous solemnity of his tones, reduced the doubts of the youth to absolute certainty. At first, with the habitual levity of the young and skeptical, he congratulated himself upon an encounter which promised to afford him a good subject for quizzing; but a moment's reflection counselled him to a more worldly policy, and he restrained his natural impulse in order that he might first sound the depths of the preacher, and learn in what respect he might be made subservient to his own purposes. He had already learned from the latter that he was on his way to Charlemont,

of which place he seemed to have some knowledge; and the youth, in an instant, conceived the possibility of making him useful in procuring for himself a favorable introduction to the place. With this thought, he assumed the grave aspect and deliberate enunciation of his companion, expressed himself equally gratified to meet with a person who, if he did not much mistake, was a divine, and concluded his address by the utterance of one of those pious commonplaces which are of sufficiently easy acquisition, and which at once secured him the unscrupulous confidence of his companion.

“Truly, it gladdens me, sir,” said the holy man in reply, “to meet with one, as a fellow-traveller in these lonesome ways, who hath a knowledge of God’s grace and the blessings which he daily sheddeth, even as the falling of the dews, upon a benighted land. It is my lot, and I repine not that such it is, to be for ever a wayfarer, in the desert where there are but few fountains to refresh the spirit. When I say desert, young gentleman, I speak not in the literal language of the world, for truly it were a most sinful denial of God’s bounty were I to say, looking round upon the mighty forests through which I pass, and upon the rich soil over which I travel, that my way lies not through a country covered, thrice covered, with the best worldly bounties of the Lord. But it is a moral desert which my speech would signify. The soul of man is here lacking the blessed fountains of the truth—the mind of man here lacketh the holy and joy-shedding lights of the spirit; and it rejoiceth me, therefore, when I meet with one, like thyself, in whose language I find a proof that thou hast neither heard the word with idle ears, nor treasured it in thy memory with unapplying mind. May I ask of thee, my young friend, who thou art, and by what name I shall call thee?—not for the satisfaction of an idle curiosity, to know either thy profession or thy private concerns, but that I may the better speak to thee in our conference hereafter.

Thou hast rightly conjectured as to my calling—and my own name, which is one unknown to most even in these forests, is John Cross—I come of a family in North Carolina, which still abide in that state, by the waters of the river Haw. Perhaps, if thou hast ever travelled in those parts, thou hast happened upon some of my kindred, which are very numerous.”

“I have never, reverend sir, travelled in those parts,” said the youth, with commendable gravity, “but I have heard of the Cross family, which I believe, as you say, to be very numerous—both male and female.”

“Yea, I have brothers and sisters an equal number; I have aunts and uncles a store, and it has been the blessing of God so to multiply and increase every member thereof, that each of my brothers, in turn, hath a goodly flock, in testimony of his favors. I, alone, of all my kindred, have neither wife nor child, and I seem as one set apart for other ties, and other purposes.”

“Ah, sir,” returned the other, quickly, and with a slyness of expression which escaped the direct and unsuspecting mind of the preacher, “but if you are denied the blessings which are theirs, you have your part in the great family of the world. If you have neither wife nor child of your own loins, yet, I trust, you have an abiding interest in the wives and children of all other men.”

“I were but an unworthy teacher of the blessed word, had I not,” was the simple answer. “Verily, all that I teach are my children; there is not one crying to me for help, to whom I do not hasten with the speed of a father flying to bring succor to his young. I trust in God, that I have not made a difference between them; that I heed not one to the forfeit or suffering of the other; and for this impartial spirit toward the flock intrusted to my charge, do I pray, as well as for the needful strength of body and soul, through which my duties are to be done. But thou hast not yet spoken thy name, or my ears have failed to receive it.”

There was some little hesitation on the part of the youth before he answered this second application ; and a less unheeding observer than his fellow-traveller, might have noticed an increasing warmth of hue upon his cheek, while he was uttering his reply :—

“I am called Alfred Stevens,” he replied at length, the color increasing upon his cheek even after the words were spoken. But they were spoken. The falsehood was registered against him beyond recall, though, of course, without startling the doubts or suspicions of his companion.

“Alfred Stevens ; there are many Stevenses : I have known several and sundry. There is a worthy family of that name by the waters of the Dan.”

“You will find them, I suspect, from Dan to Beersheba,” responded the youth with a resumption of his former levity.

“Truly, it may be so. The name is of good repute. But what is thy calling, Alfred Stevens ? Methinks at thy age thou shouldst have one.”

“So I have, reverend sir,” replied the other ; “my calling heretofore has been that of the law. But it likes me not, and I think soon to give it up.”

“Thou wilt take to some other then. What other hast thou chosen ; or art thou like those unhappy youths, by far too many in our blessed country, whom fortune hath hurt by her gifts, and beguiled into idleness and sloth ?”

“Nay, not so, reverend sir ; the gifts of fortune have been somewhat sparing in my case, and I am even now conferring with my own thoughts whether or not to take to school-keeping. Nay, perhaps, I should incline to something better, if I could succeed in persuading myself of my own worthiness in a vocation which, more than all others, demands a pure mind with a becoming zeal. The law consorts not with my desires—it teaches selfishness, rather than self-denial ; and I have already found that some of its duties demand the blindness and the silence of that best

teacher from within, the watchful and unsleeping conscience."

"Thou hast said rightly, Alfred Stevens; I have long thought that the profession of the law hardeneth the heart, and blindeth the conscience. Thou wilt do well to leave it, as a craft that leads to sin, and makes the exercise of sin a duty; and if, as I rightly understand thee, thou lookest to the gospel as that higher vocation for which thy spirit yearneth, then would I say to thee, arise, and gird up thy loins; advance and falter not;—the field is open, and though the victory brings thee no worldly profit, and but little worldly honor, yet the reward is eternal, and the interest thereof, unlike the money which thou puttest out to usury in the hands of men, never fails to be paid, at the very hour of its due, from the unfailing treasury of Heaven. Verily, I rejoice, Alfred Stevens, that I have met with thee to-day. I had feared that the day had been lost to that goodly labor, to which all my days have been given for seventeen years, come the first sabbath in the next November. But what thou hast said, awakens hope in my soul that such will not be the case. Let not my counsels fail thee, Alfred;—let thy zeal warm; let thy spirit work within thee, and thy words kindle, in the service of the Lord. How it will rejoice me to see thee taking up the scrip and the staff and setting forth for the wildernesses of the Mississippi, of Arkansas, and Texas, far beyond;—bringing the wild man of the frontier, and the red savage, into the blessed fold and constant company of the Lord Jesus, to whom all praise!"

"It were indeed a glorious service," responded the young stranger—whom we shall proceed, hereafter, to designate by the name by which he has called himself. He spoke musingly, and with a gravity that was singularly inflexible—"it were indeed a glorious service. Let me see, there were thousands of miles to traverse before one might reach the lower Arkansas; and I reckon, Mr. Cross, the roads

are mighty bad after you pass the Mississippi — nay, even in the Mississippi, through a part of which territory I have gone only this last summer, there is a sad want of causeways, and the bridges are exceedingly out of repair. There is one section of near a hundred miles, which lies between the bluffs of Ashibiloxi, and the far creek of Catahoula, that was a shame and reproach to the country and the people thereof. What, then, must be the condition of the Texas territory, beyond? and, if I err not, the Cumanchees are a race rather given to destroy than to build up. The chance is that the traveller in their country might have to swim his horse over most of the watercourses, and where he found a bridge, it were perhaps a perilous risk to cross it. Even then he might ride fifty miles a day, before he should see the smokes which would be a sign of supper that night.”

“The greater the glory — the greater the glory, Alfred Stevens. The toil and the peril, the pain and the privation, in a good cause, increase the merit of the performance in the eyes of the Lord. What matters the roads and the bridges, the length of the way, or the sometimes lack of those comforts of the flesh, which are craved only at the expense of the spirit, and to the great delay of our day of conquest. These wants are the infirmities of the human, which dissipate and disappear, the more few they become, and the less pressing in their complaint. Shake thyself loose from them, Alfred Stevens, and thy way henceforth is perfect freedom.”

“Alas! this is my very weakness, Mr. Cross: — it was because of these very infirmities, that I had doubt of my own worthiness to take up the better vocation which is yet my desire. I am sadly given to hunger and thirst toward noon and evening; and the travel of a long day makes me so weary at night, that I should say but a hurried grace before meal, and make an even more hurried supper after it. Nay, I have not yet been able to divest myself of a habit which I acquired in my boyhood; and I need at times,

throughout the day, a mouthful of something stronger than mere animal food, to sustain the fainting and feeble flesh, and keep my frame from utter exhaustion. I dare not go upon the road, even for the brief journey of a single day, without providing myself beforehand with a supply of a certain beverage, such as is even now contained within this vessel, and which is infallible against sinking of the the spirits, faintings of the frame, disordered nerves, and even against flatulence and indigestion. If, at any time, thou shouldst suffer from one or the other of these infirmities, Mr. Cross, be sure there is no better medicine for their cure than this.”

The speaker drew from his bosom a little flask, such as is sufficiently well known to most western travellers, which he held on high, and which, to the unsuspecting eyes of the preacher, contained a couple of gills or more of a liquid of very innocent complexion.

“Verily, Alfred Stevens, I do myself suffer from some of the weaknesses of which thou hast spoken. The sinking of the spirits, and the faintness of the frame, are but too often the enemies that keep me back from the plough when I would thereto set my hand; and that same flatulence —”

“A most frequent disorder in a region where greens and collards form the largest dishes on the tables of the people,” interrupted Stevens, but without changing a muscle of his countenance.

“I do believe as thou say’st, Alfred Stevens, that the disorder comes in great part from that cause, though, still, I have my doubts if it be not a sort of wind-melancholy, to which people, who preach aloud are greatly subject. It is in my case almost always associated with a sort of hoarseness, and the nerves of my frame twitch grievously at the same periods. If this medicine of thine be sovereign against so cruel an affliction, I would crave of thee such knowledge as would enable me to get a large supply of it,

that I may overcome a weakness, which, as I tell thee, oftentimes impairs my ministry, and sometimes makes me wholly incapable of fervent preaching. Let me smell of it, I pray thee."

"Nay, taste of it, sir — it is just about the time when I find it beneficial to partake of it, as a medicine for my own weakness, and I doubt not, it will have a powerful effect also upon you. A single draught has been found to relieve the worst case of flatulence and colic."

"From colic too, I am also a great sufferer," said the preacher as he took the flask in his hand, and proceeded to draw the stopper.

"That is also the child of collards," said Stevens, as he watched with a quiet and unmoved countenance the proceedings of his simple companion, who finding some difficulty in drawing the cork, handed it back to the youth. The latter, more practised, was more successful, and now returned the open bottle to the preacher.

"Take from it first, the dose which relieves thee, Alfred Stevens, that I may know how much will avail in my own case;" and he watched curiously, while Stevens, applying the flask to his lips, drew from it a draught, which, in western experience of benefits, would have been accounted a very moderate potion. This done, he handed it back to his companion, who, about to follow his example, asked him:—

"And by what name, Alfred Stevens, do they call this medicine, the goodly effect of which thou holdst to be so great?"

Stevens did not immediately reply — not until the preacher had applied the bottle to his mouth, and he could see by the distension of his throat, that he had imbibed a taste, at least, of the highly-lauded medicine. The utterance then, of the single word — "Brandy" — was productive of an effect no less ludicrous in the sight of the youth, than it was distressing to the mind of his worthy companion. The

descending liquor was ejected with desperate effort from the throat which it had fairly entered — the flask flung from his hands — and with choking and gurgling accents, startling eyes, and reddening visage, John Cross turned full upon his fellow-traveller, vainly trying to repeat, with the accompanying horror of expression which he felt, the single spellword, which had produced an effect so powerful.

“Bran — bran — brandy! — Alfred Stevens! — thou hast given me poison — the soul’s poison — the devil’s liquor — liquor distilled in the vessels of eternal sin. Wherefore hast thou done this? Dost thou not know?” —

“Know — know what, Mr. Cross?” replied Stevens, with all the astonishment which he could possibly throw into his air, as he descended from his horse with all haste to recover his flask, and save its remaining contents from loss.

“Call me not mister — call me plain John Cross,” replied the preacher — in the midst of a second fit of choking, the result of his vain effort to disgorge that portion of the pernicious liquid which had irretrievably descended into his bowels. With a surprise admirably affected, Stevens approached him.

“My dear sir — what troubles you? — what can be the matter? What have I done? What is it you fear?”

“That infernal draught — that liquor — I have swallowed of it a mouthful. I feel it in me. The sin be upon thy head, Alfred Stevens — why did you not tell me, before I drank, that it was the soul’s poison? — the poison that slays more than the sword or the pestilence; — the liquor of the devil, distilled in the vessels of sin — and sent among men for the destruction of the soul! I feel it now within me, and it burns — it burns like the fires of damnation. Is there no water nigh that I may quench my thirst? — Show me, Alfred Stevens, show me where the cool waters lie, that I may put out these raging flames.”

“There is a branch, if I mistake not, just above us on the

road — I think I see it glistening among the leaves. Let us ride toward it, sir, and it will relieve you.”

“Ah, Alfred Stevens, why have you served me thus? Why did you not tell me?”

Repeated groans accompanied this apostrophe, and marked every step in the progress of the preacher to the little rivulet which trickled across the road. John Cross, descended with the rapidity of one whose hope hangs upon a minute, and dreads its loss, as equal to the loss of life. He straddled the stream and thrust his lips into the water, drawing up a quantity sufficient, in the estimation of Stevens, to have effectually neutralized the entire contents of his flask.

“Blessed water! Blessed water! Holiest beverage! Thou art the creation of the Lord, and, next to the waters of eternal life, his best gift to undiscerning man. I drink of thee, and I am faint no longer. I rise up, strong and refreshed! Ah, my young friend, Alfred Stevens, I trust thou didst not mean me harm in giving me that poisonous liquor?”

“Far from it, sir, I rather thought to do you a great benefit.”

“How couldst thou think to do me benefit by proffering such poison to my lips? nay, wherefore dost thou thyself carry it with thee, and why dost thou drink of it, as if it were something not hurtful as well to the body as the soul? Take my counsel, I pray thee, Alfred Stevens, and cast it behind thee for ever. Look not after it when thou dost so, with an eye of regret lest thou forfeit the merit of thy self-denial. If thou wouldst pursue the higher vocation of the brethren, thou must seek for the needful strength from a better and purer spirit. But what unhappy teacher could have persuaded thee to an indulgence which the good men of all the churches agree to regard as so deadly?”

“Nay, Mr. Cross——”

“John Cross, I pray thee; do I not call thee Alfred

Stevens? — Mr. is a speech of worldly fashion, and becomes not one who should put the world and its fashions behind him.”

Stevens found it more difficult to comply with this one requisition of the preacher, than to pursue a long game of artful and complex scheming. He evaded the difficulty by dropping the name entirely.

“You are too severe upon brandy, and upon those who use it. Nay, I am not sure, but you do injustice to those who make it. So far from its manufacturers being such as you call them, we have unquestionable proof that they are very worthy people of a distant but a Christian country; and surely you will not deny that we should find a medicine for our hurts, and a remedy for our complaints, in a liquor which, perhaps, it might be sinful to use as an ordinary beverage. Doctors, who have the care of human life, and whose business and desire it is to preserve it, nevertheless do sometimes administer poisons to their patients, which poisons, though deadly at other times, will, in certain diseases and certain conditions of disease, prove of only and great good.”

“Impossible! I believe it not! I believe not in the good of brandy. It is hurtful — it is deadly. It has slain its thousands and its tens of thousands — it is worse than the sword and the summer pestilence. Many a man have I known to perish from strong drink. In my own parts, upon the river Haw, in North Carolina state, I have known many. Nay, wherefore should I spare the truth, Alfred Stevens? — the very father of my own life, Ezekiel Cross, perished miserably from this burning water of sin. I will not hear thee speak of it again; and if thou wouldst have me think of thee with favor, as one hopeful of the service of the brethren, cast the accursed beverage of Satan from thy hands.”

The youth, without a word, deliberately emptied the contents of his vessel upon the sands, and the garrulous

tips of the preacher poured forth as great a flood of speech in congratulation, as he had hitherto bestowed in homily. The good, unsuspecting man, did not perceive that the liquor thus thrown away, was very small in quantity, and that his companion, when the flask was emptied, quietly restored it to his bosom. John Cross had obtained a seeming victory, and did not care to examine its details.

CHAPTER V.

THE SERPENT IN THE GARDEN.

THE concession made by Stevens, and which had produced an effect so gratifying upon his companion, was one that involved no sacrifices. The animal appetite of the young lawyer was, in truth, comparatively speaking, indifferent to the commodity which he discarded; and even had it been otherwise, still he was one of those selfish, cool and calculating persons, who seem by nature to be perfectly able to subdue the claims of the blood, with great ease, whenever any human or social policy would appear to render it advisable. The greatest concession which he made in the transaction, was in his so readily subscribing to that false logic of the day, which reasons against the use of the gifts of Providence, because a diseased moral, and a failing education, among men, sometimes result in their abuse.

The imperfections of a mode of reasoning so utterly illogical, were as obvious to the mind of the young lawyer as to anybody else; and the compliance which he exhibited to a requisition which his own sense readily assured him was as foolish as it was presumptuous, was as degrading to his moral character from the hypocrisy which it declared, as it was happy in reference to the small policy by which he had been governed. The unsuspecting preacher did not perceive the scornful sneer which curled his lips and flashed his eyes, by which his own vanity still asserted

itself through the whole proceeding ; or he would not have been so sure that the mantle of grace which he deemed to have surely fallen upon the shoulders of his companion, was sufficiently large and sound, to cover the multitude of sins which it yet enabled the wearer, so far, to conceal. Regarding him with all the favor which one is apt to feel for the person whom he has plucked as a brand from the burning, the soul of John Cross warmed to the young sinner ; and it required no great effort of the wily Stevens to win from him the history, not only of all its own secrets and secret hopes — for these were of but small value in the eyes of the worldling — but of all those matters which belonged to the little village to which they were trending, and the unwritten lives of every dweller in that happy community.

With all the adroit and circumspect art of the lawyer, sifting the testimony of the unconscious witness, and worming from his custody those minor details which seem to the uninitiated so perfectly unimportant to the great matter immediately in hand — Stevens now propounded his direct inquiry, and now dropped his seemingly unconsidered insinuation, by which he drew from the preacher as much as he cared to know of the rustic lads and lasses of Charlemont. It does not concern our narrative to render the details thus unfolded to the stranger. And we will content ourselves, as did the younger of the travellers, who placed himself with hearty good will at the disposal of the holy man.

“ You shall find for me a place of lodging, Mr. Cross, while it shall suit me to stay in Charlemont. You have a knowledge of the people, and of the world, which I possess not ; and it will be better that I should give myself up to your guidance. I know that you will not bring me to the dwelling of persons not in good repute ; and, perhaps, I need not remind you that my worldly means are small — I must be at little charge wherever I stop.”

“ Ah, Brother Stevens, worldly goods and worldly wealth

are no more needed in Charlemont, than they are necessary to the service of the blessed Redeemer. With an empty scrip is thy service blest;—God sees the pure heart through the threadbare garment. I have friends in Charlemont who will be too happy to receive thee in the name of the Lord, without money and without price.”

The pride of Stevens, which had not shrunk from hypocrisy and falsehood, yet recoiled at a suggestion which involved the idea of his pecuniary dependence upon strangers, and he replied accordingly; though he still disguised his objections under the precious appearance of a becoming moral scruple.

“It will not become me, Mr. Cross, to burden the brethren of the church for that hospitality which is only due to brethren.”

“But thou art in the way of grace—the light is shining upon thee—the door is open, and already the voice of the Bridegroom is calling from within. Thou wilt become a burning and a shining light—and the brethren of the church will rejoice to hail thee among its chosen. Shall they hold back their hand when thou art even on the thresh-old?”

“But, Mr. Cross——”

“Call me not Mr., I pray thee. Call me plain John Cross, if it please thee not yet to apply to me that sweeter term of loving kindness which the flock of God are happy to use in speech one to another. If thou wilt call me Brother Cross, my heart shall acknowledge the bonds between us, and my tongue shall make answer to thine, in like fashion. Oh, Alfred Stevens, may the light shine soon upon thine eyes, that thou may'st know for a truth how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in the peace of of the Lord, and according to his law. I will, with God's grace, bring thee to this perfect knowledge, for I see the way clear because of the humility which thou hast already shown, and thy yielding to the counsels of the teacher.

As for what thou sayest about charges to the brethren, let that give thee no concern. Thou shalt lodge with old Brother Hinkley, who is the pattern of good things and of holiness in Charlemont. His house is more like unto the tent of the patriarch pitched upon the plain, than the house of the dweller among the cities. No lock fastens its doors against the stranger; and the heart of the aged man is even more open than the doorway of his dwelling. He standeth in the entrance like one looking out for him that cometh, and his first word to the messenger of God, is 'welcome!' Thou shalt soon see the truth of what I say to thee, for even now do we look down upon his house in the very midst of the village."

If the scruples of Stevens still continued to urge him against accepting the hospitality of the old patriarch of whom he had received a description at once just and agreeable, the recollection of the village-maiden whom he had gone aside from his direct path of travel, and made some even greater departures from the truth, to see, determined him at length to waive them; particularly when he ascertained from his fellow-traveller that he knew of nobody in Charlemont who accommodated strangers for money.

Stevens was one of those persons who watch the progress of events, and he resolved, with a mental reservation—that seems strange enough in the case of one who had shown so little reluctance to say and do the thing which he could not maintain or defend—to avail himself of some means for requiting, to the uttermost farthing, the landlord, to whose hospitality he might be indebted during his stay in Charlemont.

Such are the contradictions of character which hourly detect and describe the mere worldling—the man lacking in all principle, but that which is subservient to his selfish policy. To accept money or money's worth from a stranger, seemed mean and humbling to one, who did not hesitate, in the promotion of a scheme, which had treachery for

its object, to clothe himself in the garments of deception, and to make his appearance with a lie festering upon his lips. That evening, Alfred Stevens became, with his worthier companion, an inmate of the happy dwelling of William Hinkley, the elder—a venerable, white-headed father, whose whole life had made him worthy of a far higher eulogium than that which John Cross had pronounced upon him.

The delight of the family to see their reverend teacher was heartfelt and unreserved. A vigorous gripe of the hand, by the elder dragged him into the house, and a sentence of unusual length, from his better half, assured him of that welcome which the blunter action of her venerable husband had already sufficiently declared. Nor was the young adventurer who accompanied the preacher, suffered to remain long unconsidered. When John Cross had told them who he was, or rather when he had declared his spiritual hopes in him—which he did with wonderful unction, in a breath—the reception of old Hinkley, which had been hospitable enough before, became warm and benignant; and Brother Stevens already became the word of salutation, whenever the old people desired to distinguish their younger guest.

Brother Stevens, it may be said here, found no difficulty in maintaining the character he had assumed. He had, in high degree, the great art of the selfish man, and could, when his game required it, subdue with little effort, those emotions and impulses, which the frank and ardent spirit must speak out or die. He went into the house of the hospitable old man, and into the village of Charlemont, as if he had gone into the camp of an enemy. He was, indeed, a spy, seeking to discover, not the poverty, but the richness of the land. His mind, therefore, was like one who has clothed himself in armor, placed himself in waiting for the foe, and set all his sentinels on the watch. His caution measured every word ere it was spoken, every

look ere it was shown, every movement ere he suffered his limbs to make it. The muscles of his face, were each put under curb and chain—the smiles of the lip and the glances of the eyes, were all subdued to precision, and permitted to go forth, only under special guard and restriction. In tone, look, and manner, he strove as nearly as he might, to resemble the worthy but simple-minded man, who had so readily found a worthy adherent and pupil in him; and his efforts at deception might be held to be sufficiently successful, if the frank confiding faith of the aged heads of the Hinkley family be the fitting test of his experiment.

With them he was soon perfectly at home—his own carriage seemed to them wondrously becoming, and the approbation of John Cross was of itself conclusive. The preacher was the oracle of the family, all of whom were only too happy of his favor not to make large efforts to be pleased with those he brought; and in a little while, sitting about the friendly fireside, the whole party had become as sociable as if they had been “hail fellow! well met,” a thousand years. Two young girls, children of a relative, and nieces of the venerable elder, had already perched themselves upon the knee of the stranger, and strove at moments over his neck and shoulder, without heeding the occasional sugary reproof of Dame Hinkley, which bade them “let Brother Stevens be;” and, already had Brother Stevens himself, ventured upon the use of sundry grave saws from the holy volume, the fruit of early reading and a retentive memory, which not a little helped to maintain his novel pretensions in the mind of the brethren, and the worthy teacher, John Cross himself. All things promised a long duration to a friendship suddenly begun; when William Hinkley, the younger, a youth already introduced to the reader, made his appearance within the happy circle. He wore a different aspect from all the rest as he recognised in the person of Brother Stevens, the handsome stranger, his antipathy to whom, at a first glance, months

before, seemed almost to have the character of a warning instinct. A nearer glance did not serve to lessen his hostility.

Our traveller was to the eye of a lover, one, indeed, who promised dangerous rivalry, and an intrepid air of confidence which, even his assumed character could not enable him to disguise from the searching eyes of jealousy, contributed to strengthen the dislike of the youth for a person who seemed so perfectly sure of his ground. Still, William Hinkley behaved as a civil and well-bred youth might be expected to behave. He did not suffer his antipathy to put on the aspect of rudeness; he was grave and cold, but respectful; and though he did not "be-brother" the stranger, he yet studiously subdued his tones to mildness, when it became necessary, in the course of the evening meal, that he should address him. Few words, however, were exchanged between the parties. If Hinkley beheld an enemy to his heart's hopes in Stevens, the latter was sufficiently well-read in the human heart to discover quite as soon, that the rustic was prepared to see in himself any character but that of a friend. The unwillingness with which Hinkley heard his suggestions—the absence of all freedom and ease in his deportment, toward himself, so different from the manner of the youth when speaking or listening to all other persons; the occasional gleam of jealous inquiry and doubt within his eye, and the utter lack of all enthusiasm and warmth in his tones while he spoke to him, satisfied Stevens, that he, of all the household of his hospitable entertainers, if not actually suspicious of his true character, was the one whose suspicions were those most easily to be awakened, and who of all others, needed most to be guarded against. It will not increase our estimate of the wisdom of the stranger, to learn that, with this conviction, he should yet arrogate to himself a tone of superiority, while speaking in hearing of the youth.

This was shown in a manner that was particularly galling

to a high-spirited youth, and one whose pre-judged silence, already awakened against the speaker. It was that silent, paternal and patronizing senior, whose very gentleness and benignity of look and accent, seem to arise from a full conviction of the vast difference which exists between himself and his hearer. An indignity like this, which can not be resented, is one which the young mind feels always most anxious to resent. The very difficulties in the way of doing so, stimulates the desire. Such was the feeling of William Hinkley. With such a feeling it may be conjectured that opportunity was not long wanting, or might soon be made, for giving utterance to the suppressed fires of anger which were struggling in his heart. Days and weeks may elapse, but the antipathy will declare itself at last. It would be easier to lock up the mountain torrent after the breath of the tornado has torn away its rocky seals, than to stifle in the heart that hates, because of its love, the fierce fury which these united passions enkindle within it.

In the first hour of their first interview, William Hinkley and Alfred Stevens felt that they were mutual foes. In that little space of time, the former had but one thought, which, though it changed its aspect with each progressive moment, never for an instant changed its character. He panted with the hope of redressing himself for wrongs which he could not name; for injuries and indignities which he knew not how to describe. Stevens had neither done nor said anything which might be construed into an offence. And yet, nobody knew better than Stevens that he had been offensive. The worthy John Cross, in the simplicity of his nature, never dreamed of this, but, on the contrary, when our adventurer dilated in the fatherly manner already adverted to, he looked upon himself as particularly favored of Heaven, in falling upon a youth, as a pupil, of such unctuous moral delivery.

“Surely,” he mused internally, “this is a becoming in

strument which I have found, for the prosecution of the good work. He will bear the word like one sent forth to conquer. He will bind and loose with a strong hand. He will work wondrous things!"

Not unlike these were the calculations of old Hinkley, as he hearkened to the reverend reasonings and the solemn commonplaces of the stranger. Stevens, like most recent converts, was the most uncompromising enemy of those sins from which he professed to have achieved with difficulty his own narrow escape; and finding, from the attentive ear of his audience, that he had made a favorable impression, he proceeded to manufacture for them his religious experience; an art which his general information, and knowledge of the world enabled him to perform without much difficulty.

But the puritan declamation which pleased all the rest, disgusted young Hinkley, and increased his dislike for the declaimer. There was too much of the worldling in the looks, dress, air, and manner of Stevens, to satisfy the rustic of his sincerity. Something of his doubts had their source, without question, in the antipathy which he had formed against him; but William Hinkley was not without keen, quick, observing, and justly discriminating faculties, and much of his conclusions were the due consequence of a correct estimate of the peculiarities which we have named. Stevens, he perceived, declared his experiences of religion, with the air of one who expects the congratulations of his audience. The humility which thinks only of the acquisition itself, as the very perfection of human conquest, was wanting equally to his language and deportment. The very details which he gave, were ostentatious; and the gracious smiles which covered his lips as he concluded, were those of the self-complacent person, who feels that he has just been saying those good things, which, of necessity, must command the applause of his hearers.

A decent pause of half an hour after the supper was in

ished, which was spent by the jealous youth in utter silence, and he then rose abruptly and hurried from the apartment, leaving the field entirely to his opponent. He proceeded to the house of his neighbor and cousin, Ned Hinkley, but without any hope of receiving comfort from his communion. Ned was a lively, thoughtless, light-hearted son of the soil, who was very slow to understand sorrows of any kind; and least of all, those which lie in the fancy of a dreaming and a doubtful lover. At this moment, when the possession of a new violin absorbed all his thoughts, his mind was particularly obtuse on the subject of sentimental grievances, and the almost voluptuous delight which filled his eyes when William entered his chamber, entirely prevented him from seeing the heavy shadow which overhung the brows of the latter.

“What, back again, William? Why, you’re as changeable as the last suit of a green lizard. When I asked you to stop, and hear me play ‘Cross-possum,’ and ‘Criss-cross,’ off you went without giving me a civil answer. I’ve a mind now to put up the fiddle and send your ears to bed supperless. How would you like that, old fellow? but I’ll be good-natured. You shall have it, though you don’t deserve it: she’s in prime tune, and the tones—only hear that, Bill—there. Isn’t she delicious?”

And as the inconsiderate cousin poured out his warmest eulogy of the favorite instrument, his right hand flourished the bow in air, in a style that would have cheered the heart of Jean Crapaud himself, and then brought it over the catgut in a grand crash, that sounded as harshly in the ears of his morbid visiter, as if the two worlds had suddenly come together with steam-engine velocity. He clapped his hands upon the invaded organs, and with something like horror in his voice, cried out his expostulations.

“For heaven’s sake, Ned, don’t stun a body with your noise.”

“Noise! Did you say noise, Bill Hinkley—noise?”

"Yes, noise," answered the other with some peevishness in his accents. The violinist looked at him incredulously, while he suffered the point of the fiddle-bow to sink on a line with the floor; then, after a moment's pause, he approached his companion, wearing in his face the while, an appearance of the most grave inquiry, and when sufficiently nigh, he suddenly brought the bow over the strings of the instrument, immediately in William's ears, with a sharp and emphatic movement, producing an effect to which the former annoying crash, might well have been thought a very gentle effusion. This was followed by an uncontrollable burst of laughter from the merry lips of the musician.

"There—that's what I call a noise, Bill. Sweet Sall *can* make a noise when I worry her into it; she's just like other women in that respect; she'll be sure to squall out if you don't touch her just in the right quarter. But the first time she did *not* go amiss, and as for stunning you—but what's the matter? Where's the wind now?"

"Nothing—only I don't want to be deafened with such a clatter."

"Something's wrong, Bill, I know it. You look now for all the world like a bottle of sour sop, with the cork out, and ready to boil over. As for Sall making a noise the first time, that's all a notion, and a very strange one. She was as sweet-spoken then as she was when you left me before supper. The last time, I confess, I made her squall out on purpose. But what of that? you are not the man to get angry with a little fun!"

"No, I'm not angry with you, Ned—I am not angry with anybody; but just now, I would rather *not* hear the fiddle. Put it up."

"There!" said the other good-naturedly, as he placed the favorite instrument in its immemorial case in the corner. "There; and now Bill, untie the pack, and let's see the sort of wolf-cubs you've got to carry; for there's no two horns to a wild bull, if something hasn't gored you to-night."

"You're mistaken, Ned—quite mistaken—quite!"

"Deuse a bit! I know you too well, Bill Hinkley, so it's no use to hush up now. Out with it, and don't be sparing, and if there's any harm to come, I'm here, just as ready to risk a cracked crown for you, as if the trouble was my own. I'd rather fiddle than fight, it's true; but when there's any need for it, you know I can do one just as well as the other; and can go to it with just as much good humor. So show us the quarrel."

"There's no quarrel, Ned," said the other, softened by the frank and ready feeling which his companion showed; "but I'm very foolish in some things, and don't know how it is. I'm not apt to take dislikes, but there's a man come to our house with John Cross, this evening, that I somehow dislike very much."

"A man! What's he like? Anything like Joe Richards? That was a fellow that I hated mightily. I never longed to lick any man but Joe Richards, and him I longed to lick three times, though you know I never got at him more than twice. It's a great pity he got drowned, for I owe him a third licking, and don't feel altogether right, since I know no sort of way to pay it. But if this man's anything like Joe, it may be just the same if I give it to *him*. Now——"

"He's nothing like Richards," said the other. "He's a taller and better-looking man."

"If he's nothing like Joe, what do you want to lick him for?" said the single-minded musician, with a surprise in his manner, which was mingled with something like rebuke.

"I have expressed no such wish, Ned; you are too hasty; and if I did wish to whip him, I don't think I should trouble you or any man to help me. If I could not do it myself, I should give it up as a bad job, without calling in assistants."

"Oh, you're a spunky fellow—a real colt for hard riding," retorted the other with a good-natured mock in his tones and looks; "but if you don't want to lick the fellow, how comes it you dislike him? It seems to me if a

chap behaved so as to make me dislike him, it wouldn't be an easy matter to keep my hands off him. I'd teach him how to put me into a bad humor, or I'd never touch violin again."

"This man's a parson, I believe."

"A parson — that's a difficulty. It is not altogether right to lick parsons, because they're not counted fighting people. But there's a mighty many on 'em that licking would help. No wonder you dislike the fellow, though if he comes with John Cross, he shouldn't be altogether so bad. Now, John Cross is a good man. He's good, and he's good-humored. He don't try to set people's teeth on edge against all the pleasant things of this world, and he can laugh, and talk, and sing, like other people. Many's the time he's asked me, of his own mouth, to play the violin; and I've seen his little eyes caper again, when sweet Sall talked out her funniest. If it was not so late, I'd go over now and give him a reel or two, and then I could take a look at this strange chap, that's set your grinders against each other."

The fiddler looked earnestly at the instrument in the corner, his features plainly denoting his anxiety to resume the occupation which his friends coming had so inopportunately interrupted. William Hinkley saw the looks of his cousin, and divined the cause.

"You shall play for me, Ned," he remarked; "you shall give me that old highland-reel that you learned from Scotch Geordie. It will put me out of my bad humor, I think, and we can go to bed quietly. I've come to sleep with you to-night."

"You're a good fellow, Bill; I knew that you couldn't stand it long, if Sweet Sall kept a still tongue in her head. ^{ry good} reel's ^{ut it up} every thing to drive away bad humors, though there's another that I learnt from John Blodget, the boatman, that sounds to me the merriest and comicallest thing in the world. It goes——," and here the fiddle was put in requisition to produce the required sounds: and having got *carte blanche*, our enthusiastic performer, without wear-

iness, went through his whole collection, without once perceiving that his comical and merry tunes had entirely failed to change the grave, and even gloomy expression which still mantled the face of his companion. It was only when in his exhaustion he set down the instrument, that he became conscious of William Hinkley's continued discomposure.

"Why, Bill, the trouble has given you a bigger bite than I thought for. What words did you have with the preacher?"

"None: I don't know that he is a preacher. He speaks only as if he was trying to become one."

"What, you hadn't any difference — no quarrel?"

"None."

"And it's only to-night that you've seen him for the first time?"

A flush passed over the grave features of William Hinkley as he heard this question, and it was with a hesitating manner and faltering accents, that he contrived to tell his cousin of the brief glimpse which he had of the same stranger several months before, on that occasion, when, in the emotion of Margaret Cooper, replying to a similar question, he first felt the incipient seed of jealousy planted within his bosom. But this latter incident he forbore to reveal to the inquirer; and Ned Hinkley, though certainly endowed by nature with sufficient skill to draw forth the very soul of music from the instrument on which he played, had no similar power upon the secret soul of the person whom he partially examined.

"But 'tis very strange how you should take offence at a man you've seen so little; though I have heard before this of people taking dislikes at other people the first moment they set eyes on 'em. Now, I'm not a person of that sort, unless it was in the case of Joe Richards; and him I took a sort of grudge at from the first beginning. But even then there was a sort of reason for it; for, at the beginning, when Joe came down upon us here in Charle-

mont, he was for riding over people's necks, without so much as asking, 'by your leave.' He had a way about him that vexed me, though we did not change a word."

"And it's that very way that this person has that I don't like," said William Hinkley. "He talks as if he made you, and when you talk, he smiles as if he thought you were the very worst work that ever went out of his hands. Then, if he has to say anything, be it ever so trifling, he says it just as if he was telling you that the world was to come to an end the day after to-morrow."

"Just the same with Joe Richards. I never could get at him but twice; though I give him then a mighty smart hammering; and if he hadn't got under the broadhorn and got drowned; — but this fellow?"

"You'll see him at church to-morrow. I shouldn't wonder if he preaches; for John Cross was at him about it before I came away. What's worse, the old man's been asking him to live with us."

"What, here in Charlemont?"

"Yes."

"I'll be sure to lick him then, if he's anything like Joe Richards. But what's to make him live in Charlemont? Is he to be a preacher for us?"

"Perhaps so, but I couldn't understand all, for I came in while they were at it, and left home before they were done. I'm sure if he stays there I shall not. I shall leave home, for I really dislike to meet him."

"You shall stay with me, Bill, and we'll have Sall at all hours," was the hearty speech of the cousin, as he threw his arms around the neck of his morose companion, and dragged him gently toward the adjoining apartment, which formed his chamber. "To-morrow," he continued, "as you say, we'll see this chap, and if he's anything like Joe Richards—" The doubled fist of the speaker, and his threatening visage, completed the sentence with which this present conference and chapter may very well conclude

CHAPTER VI.

THE TOAD ON THE ALTAR.

THE next day was the sabbath. John Cross had timed his arrival at the village with a due reference to his duties, and after a minute calculation of days and distances, so that his spiritual manna might be distributed in equal proportions among his hungering flock. His arrival made itself felt accordingly, not simply in Charlemont, but throughout the surrounding country for a circuit of ten miles or more. There was a large and hopeful gathering of all sorts and sexes, white and black, old and young. Charlemont had a very pretty little church of its own; but one, and that, with more true Christianity than is found commonly in this world of pretence and little tolerance, was open to preachers of all denominations. The word of God, among these simple folks, was quite too important to make them scruple at receiving it from the lips of either Geneva, Rome, or Canterbury. The church stood out among the hills at a little distance from, but in sight of the village; a small, neat Grecian-like temple, glimmering white and saintlike through solemn-visaged groves, and gaudy green foliage. The old trees about it were all kept neatly trimmed, the brush pruned away and cleared up, and a smooth sweet sward, lawnlike, surrounded it, such as children love to skip and scramble over, and older children rest at length upon, in pairs, talking over their sweet silly affections.

Surrounded by an admiring crowd, each of whom had his

respectful salutation, we see our friend John Cross toward noon approaching the sacred dwelling. Truly he was the most simple, fraternal of all God's creatures. He had a good word for this, an affectionate inquiry for that, a benevolent smile, and a kind pressure of the hand for all. He was a man to do good, for everybody saw that he thought for others before himself, and sincerity and earnestness constitute, with the necessary degree of talent, the grand secrets for making successful teachers in every department.

Though a simple, unsophisticated, unsuspecting creature, John Cross was a man of very excellent natural endowments. He chose for his text a passage of the Scriptures which admitted of a direct practical application to the concerns of the people, their daily wants, their pressing interests, moral, human, and social. He was thus enabled to preach a discourse which sent home many of his congregation much wiser than they came, if only in reference to their homely duties of farmstead and family. John Cross was none of those sorry and self-constituted representatives of our eternal interests, who deluge us with a vain, worthless declamation, proving that virtue is a very good thing, religion a very commendable virtue, and a liberal contribution to the church-box at the close of the sermon one of the most decided proofs that we have this virtue in perfection. Nay, it is somewhat doubtful, indeed, if he ever once alluded to the state of his own scrip and the treasury of the church. His faith, sincere, spontaneous, ardent, left him in very little doubt that the Lord will provide, for is he not called "JEHOVAH-JIREH?" — and his faith was strengthened and confirmed by the experience of his whole life. But then John Cross had few wants — few, almost none! In this respect he resembled the first apostles. The necessities of life once cared for, never was mortal man more thoroughly independent of the world. He was not one of those fine preachers who, dealing out counsels of self-denial, in grave

saws and solemn maxims, with wondrous grim visage and a most slow, lugubrious shaking of the head — are yet always religiously careful to secure the warmest seat by the fire-side, and the best buttered bun on table. He taught no doctrine which he did not practise; and as for consideration — that test at once of the religionist and the gentleman — he was as humbly solicitous of the claims and feelings of others, as the lovely and lowly child to whom reverence has been well taught as the true beginning, equally of politeness and religion.

Before going into church he urged his *protégé*, Stevens, to consent to share in the ceremonies of the service as a layman; but there was still some saving virtue in the young man, which made him resolute in refusing to do so. Perhaps, his refusal was dictated by a policy like that which had governed him so far already; which made him reluctant to commit himself to a degree which might increase very much the hazards of detection. He feared, indeed, the restraints which the unequivocal adoption of the profession would impose upon him, fettering somewhat the freedom of his intercourse with the young of both sexes, and, consequently, opposing an almost insurmountable barrier to the prevailing object which had brought him to the village. Whatever may have been the feelings or motives which governed him, they, at least, saved him from an act which would have grievously aggravated his already large offence against truth and propriety. He declined, in language of the old hypocrisy. He did not feel justified in taking up the cross — he felt that he was not yet worthy; and, among the members of a church, which takes largely into account the momentary impulses and impressions of the professor, the plea was considered a sufficiently legitimate one.

But though Stevens forbore to commit himself openly in the cause which he professed a desire to espouse, he was yet sufficiently heedful to maintain all those externals of

devotion which a serious believer would be apt to exhibit. He could be a good actor of a part, and in this lay his best talent. He had that saving wisdom of the worldling, which is too often estimated beyond its worth, called cunning; and the frequent successes of which produces that worst of all the diseases that ever impaired the value of true greatness—conceit. Alfred Stevens fancied that he could do everything, and this fancy produced in him the appearance of a courage which his moral nature never possessed. He had the audacity which results from presumption, not the wholesome strength which comes from the conscious possession of a right purpose. But a truce to our metaphysics.

Never did saint wear the aspect of such supernatural devotion. He knelt with the first, groaned audibly at intervals, and when his face became visible, his eyes were strained in upward glances, so that the spectator could behold little more in their orbs than a sea of white.

“Oh! what a blessed young man!” said Mrs. Quackenbosh.

“How I wish it was he that was to preach for us to-day,” responded that gem from the antique, Miss Polly Entwistle, who had joined every church in Kentucky in turn, without having been made a spouse in either.

“How handsome he is!” simpered Miss Julia Evergreen—a damsel of seventeen, upon whom the bilious eyes of Miss Entwistle were cast with such an expression as the devil is said to put on when suddenly soused in holy water.

“Handsome is that handsome does!” was the commentary of a venerable cormorant to whom Brother Cross had always appeared the special and accepted agent of heaven.

“I wish Brother Cross would get him to pray only. I wonder if he believes in the new-light doctrine?” purred one of the ancient tabbies of the conventicle.

“The new light is but the old darkness, Sister Wid-geon,” responded an old farmer of sixty four, who had

divided his time so equally between the plough and the prayer-book, that his body had grown as crooked as the one, while his mind was bewildered with as many doctrines as ever worried all sense out of the other.

We shall not suffer these to divert us, any more than Stevens permitted their speculations upon his person and religion to affect his devotion. He looked neither to the right nor to the left while entering the church, or engaging in the ceremonies. No errant glances were permitted to betray to the audience a mind wandering from the obvious duties before it; and yet Alfred Stevens knew just as well that every eye in the congregation was fixed upon him, as that he was himself there; and among those eyes, his own keen glance had already discovered those of that one for whom all these labors of hypocrisy were undertaken.

Margaret Cooper sat on the opposite side of the church, but the line of vision was uninterrupted between them, and when—though very unfrequently—Stevens suffered his gaze to rest upon her form, it was with a sudden look of pleased abstraction, as if, in spite of himself, his mind was irresistibly drawn away from all recollection of its immediate duties.

If a word is sufficient for the wise, a look answers an equal purpose with the vain. Margaret Cooper left the church that morning with a pleased conviction that the handsome stranger had already paid his devotion to her charms. There was yet another passion to be gratified. The restless ambition of her foolish heart whispered to her momentarily, that if her person had done so much, what might she not hope to achieve when the treasures of her mind were known. She had long since made the comparison of her own intellect with that of every other maiden in the village, and she flattered herself that before many days, the young stranger should make it too. Her vain heart was rapidly preparing to smooth the path of the enemy and make his conquests easy.

But it was not the women only, by whom the deportment of Alfred Stevens was so closely watched. The eyes of suspicion and jealousy were upon him. The two young men whose interview formed the conclusion of our last chapter, scanned his conduct and carriage with sufficient keenness of scrutiny.

"I'll tell you what, Bill Hinkley," said his cousin, "this fellow, to my thinking, is a very great rascal."

"What makes you think so?" demanded the former, with slow, dissatisfied accents; "he seems to pray very earnestly."

"That's the very reason I think him a rascal. His praying seems to me very unnatural. Here, he's a perfect stranger in the place, yet he never shows any curiosity to see the people. He never once looks around him. He walks to the church with his eye cast upon the ground, and sometimes he squints to this side and sometimes to that, but he seems to do it slyly, and seems to take pains that nobody should see him doing it. All this might answer for an old man, who—believes that everything is vanity—as, indeed, everything must seem to old people; but to a young fellow, full of blood, who eats well, drinks well, sleeps well, and should naturally have a hankering after a young girl, all this is against nature. Now, what's against nature is wrong, and there's wrong at the bottom of it. Youth is the time to laugh, dance, sing, play on the violin, and always have a sweetheart when it can find one. If you can't get a beauty take a brown; and if Mary won't smile, Susan will. But always have a sweetheart; always be ready for fun and frolic; that's the way for the young, and when they don't take these ways, it's unnatural—there's something wrong about it, and I'm suspicious of *that* person. Now, I just have this notion of the young stranger. He's after no good. I reckon he's like a hundred others; too lazy to go to work, he goes to preaching, and learns in the first sermon to beg hard for the missionaries. I'll lick him,

Bill, to a certainty, if he gives me the littlest end of an opportunity."

"Pshaw, Ned, don't think of such a thing. You are quite too fond of licking people."

"Deuse a bit. It does 'em good. Look you, this chap is monstrous like Joe Richards. I'll have to lick him on that account."

"You're mad, Ned; talk of whipping a preacher."

"He's no preacher yet," said the other, "but if I lick him he may become one."

"No matter, he's never offended you."

"Ay, but he will. I see it in the fellow's looks. I never was mistaken in a fellow's looks in all my life."

"Wait till he does offend you then."

"Well, I'm willing to do that, for I know the time will come. I'm always sure, when I first see a man, to know whether I'll have to flog him or not. There's a something that tells me so. Isn't that very singular, Bill?"

"No! you form a prejudice against a man, fancy that you ought to whip him, and then never rest till you've done so. You'll find your match some day."

"What! you think some other chap will fancy he ought to whip me? Well—maybe so. But this ain't the fellow to do that."

"He's a stout man, and I reckon strong. Besides, Ned, he's very handsome."

"Handsome! Lord, Bill, what a taste you have? How can a man be called handsome that never altogether opens his eyes, except when he turns up the whites until you'd think he'd never be able to get the balls back to their proper place? Then, what a chin he has—as sharp as a pitchfork, and who but a girl child would fancy a man with his hair combed sleek like a woman's on each side of his ears, with big whiskers at the same time that looks for all the world like the brush of a seven years running fox.

Handsome! If my pup 'Dragon' was only half so much like a beast, I'd plump him into the horsepond!"

It is probable that Ned Hinkley did not altogether think of the stranger as he expressed himself. But he saw how deep a hold his appearance had taken, in an adverse way, upon the mind and feelings of his relative and friend, and his rude, but well-meant endeavors were intended to console his companion, after his own fashion, by the exhibition of a certain degree of sympathy.

His efforts, however well intended, did not produce any serious effect. William Hinkley, though he forbore the subject, and every expression which might indicate either soreness or apprehension, was still the victim of that presentiment which had touched him on the very first appearance of the stranger. He felt more than ever apprehensive on the score of his misplaced affections. While his cousin had been watching the stranger, *his* eyes had been fixed upon those of Margaret Cooper, and his fears were increased and strengthened; as he perceived that she was quite too much absorbed in other thoughts and objects to behold for an instant the close espionage which he maintained upon her person. His heart sunk within him, as he beheld how bold was her look, and how undisguised the admiration which it expressed for the handsome stranger.

"You will go home with me, William?" said the cousin.

The other hesitated.

"I think," said he, after a moment's pause, "I should rather go to my own home. It is a sort of weakness to let a stranger drive a man off from his own family, and though I somehow dislike this person's looks, and am very sorry that John Cross brought him to our house, yet I shouldn't let a prejudice which seems to have no good foundation take such possession of my mind. I will go home, Ned, and see—perhaps I may come to like the stranger more when I know him better."

"You'll never like him. I see it in the fellow's eye; but

just as you please about going home. You're right in one thing—never to give up your own dunghill, so long as you can get room on it for a fair fling with your enemy. Besides, you can see better, by going home, what the chap's after. I don't see why he should come here to learn to preach. We can't support a preacher. We don't want one. He could just as well have learned his business, where he came from."

With these words the cousins separated.

"Now," said Ned Hinkley as he took his own way homeward, in a deeper fit of abstraction than was altogether usual with him, "now will Bill Hinkley beat about the bush without bouncing through it, until it's too late to do anything. He's mealy-mouthed with the woman, and mealy-mouthed with the man, and mealy-mouthed with everybody.—quite too soft-hearted and too easy to get on. Here's a stranger nobody knows, just like some crow from another corn-field, that'll pick up his provisions from under his very nose, and he doing nothing to hinder until there's no use in trying. If I don't push in and help him, he'll not help himself. As for Margaret Cooper, dang it, I'll court her for him myself. If he's afraid to pop the question, I ain't; though I'll have to be mighty careful about the words I use, or she'll be thinking I come on my own hook; and that would be a mighty scary sort of business all round the house. Then this stranger. If anybody can look through a stranger here in Charlemont, I reckon I'm that man. I suspect him already. I think he's after no good with his great religioning; and I'll tie such a pair of eyes to his heels, that his understanding will never be entirely out of my sight. I'll find him out if anybody can. But I won't lick him till I do. That wouldn't be altogether right, considering he's to be a parson, though I doubt he'll never make ore."

And thus, with a head filled with cares of a fashion altogether new, the sturdy young Kentuckian moved home.

ward with a degree of abstraction in his countenance which was not among the smallest wonders of the day and place in the estimation of his friends and neighbors.

Meanwhile, the work of mischief was in full progress. Everybody knows the degree of familiarity which exists among all classes in a country-village, particularly when the parties are brought together under the social and stimulating influences of religion. It was natural that the pastor, long known and well beloved, should be surrounded by his flock as he descended from the pulpit. The old ladies always have a saving interest in his presence, and they pave the way for the young ones. Alfred Stevens, as the protégé of John Cross, naturally attended his footsteps, and was introduced by him to the little congregation, which had mostly remained to do honor to the preacher. Of these, not last, nor least, was the widow Cooper; and, unreluctant by her side, though in silence, and not without a degree of emotion, which she yet was able to conceal, stood her fair but proud-hearted daughter.

Margaret, alas! Margaret stood there with a heart more proud, yet more humble, than ever. Proud in the consciousness of a new conquest—humble in the feeling that this conquest had not been made, but at the expense of some portion of her own independence. Hitherto, her suitors had awakened no other feeling in her heart but vanity. Now, she felt no longer able to sail on, “imperial arbitress,” smiling at woes which she could inflict, but never share. That instinct, which, in the heart of young Hinkley had produced fear, if not antipathy, had been as active in her case, though with a very different result. The first glimpse which she had of the handsome stranger, months before, had impressed her with a singular emotion; and now that he was returned, she could not divest herself of the thought that his return was a consequence of that one glimpse.

With a keener judgment than belonged to her neighbors, she too had some suspicions that religion was scarcely the

prevailing motive which had brought the youth back to their little village; for how could she reconcile with his present demure gravity and devout profession, the daring which he had shown in riding back to behold her a second time? That such had been his motive she divined by her own feeling of curiosity, and the instincts of vanity were prompt enough to believe that this was motive sufficient to bring him back once more, and under the guise of a character, which would the readiest secure an easy entrance to society. Pleased with the fancy that she herself was the object sought, she did not perceive how enormous was the sort of deception which the stranger had employed to attain the end desired. With all her intellect she had not the wisdom to suspect that he who could so readily practise so bold an hypocrisy, was capable of the worst performances; and when their names were mentioned, and his eyes were permitted to meet and mingle their glances with hers, she was conscious of nothing farther than a fluttering sentiment of pleasure, which was amply declared to the stranger, in the flash of animation which spoke openly in her countenance; eye speaking to lip and cheek, and these, in turn, responding with a kindred sentiment to the already tell-tale eye.

William Hinkley, from a little distance, beheld this meeting. He had lingered with the curiosity which belongs to the natural apprehension of the lover. He saw them approach—nay, fancied he beheld the mutual expression of their sympathizing eyes, and he turned away, and hurried homeward, with the feeling of a heart already overborne, and defrauded in all its hopes and expectations. The flowers were threatened with blight in his Eden: but he did not conjecture, poor fellow, that a serpent had indeed entered it!

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOOD YOUNG MAN IN MEDITATION.

PERHAPS, it may be assumed, with tolerable safety, that no first villany is ever entirely deliberate. There is something in events to give it direction—something to egg it on—to point out time, place, and opportunity. Of course, it is to be understood that the actor is one, in the first place, wanting in the moral sense. What we simply mean to affirm is, that the particular, single act, is, in few instances, deliberately meditated from the beginning. We very much incline to think that some one event, which we ordinarily refer to the chapter of accidents, has first set the mind to work upon schemes, which would otherwise, perhaps, never be thought of at all. Thus, we find persons who continue very good people, as the world goes, until middle age, or even seniority; then, suddenly breaking out into some enormous offence against decency and society, which startles the whole pious neighborhood. Folks start up, with outstretched hands and staring eyes, and cry aloud:—

“Lord bless us, who would have thought so good a man could be so bad!”

He, poor devil, never fancied it himself, till he became so, and it was quite too late to alter his arrangements. Perhaps his neighbors may have had some share in making him so. Pious persons are very frequently reduced to these straits by having the temptation forced too much upon them. Flesh and blood can not always withstand the provocation of earthly delicacies, even where the spirit is a

tolerably stout one ; and of the inadequacy of the mind, always to contend with the inclinations of the flesh, have we not a caution in that injunction of Holy Book which warns us to fly from temptation ? But lame people can not fly, and he is most certainly lame who halts upon mere feet of circumstances. Such people are always in danger.

Now, Alfred Stevens, properly brought up, from the beginning, at some theological seminary, would have been—though in moral respects pretty much the same person—yet in the eye of the world a far less criminal man. Not that his desires would have been a jot more innocent, but they would have taken a different direction. Instead of the recklessness of course, such as seems to have distinguished the conduct of our present subject—instead of his loose indulgences—his smart, licentious speeches—the sheep’s-eye glances, right and left, which he was but too prone to bestow, without prudence or precaution, whenever he walked among the fair sisters—he, the said Alfred, would have taken counsel of a more worldly policy, which is yet popularly considered a more pious one. He would have kept his eyes from wandering to and fro ; he would have held his blood in subjection. Patient as a fox on a long scent in autumn, he would have kept himself lean and circumspect, until, through the help of lugubrious prayer and lantern visage, he could have beguiled into matrimony some one feminine member of the flock—not always fair—whose worldly goods would have sufficed in full atonement for all those circumspect, self-imposed restraints, which we find usually so well rewarded. But Alfred Stevens was not a man of this pious temper. It is evident, from his present course, that he had some inkling of the *modus operandi* ; but all his knowledge fell short of that saving wisdom which would have defrauded the social world of one of its moral earthquakes, and possibly deprived the survivors of the present moral story—for moral it is, though our hero is not exactly so

It would be doing our subject and our theory equal injustice if we were to suppose that he had any fixed purpose, known to himself, when he borrowed the professional garment, and began to talk with the worthy John Cross in the language of theology, and with the tongue of a hypocrite. He designed to visit Charlemont—that was all—as he had really been impressed by the commanding figure and noble expression of beauty of that young damsel whom he had encountered by the roadside. Even this impression, however, would have been suffered to escape from his mind, had it not been so perfectly convenient to revisit the spot, on his return to his usual place of residence. During the summer, Charlemont and its rustic attractions had been the frequent subject of a conversation, running into discussion, between himself and the amiable old man, his uncle. The latter repeatedly urged upon his nephew to make the visit; fondly conceiving that a nearer acquaintance with the pleasant spot which had so won upon his own affections, would be productive of a like effect upon his nephew. Alas, how little did he know the mischief he was doing!

In the very idleness of mood—with just that degree of curiosity which prompts one to turn about and look a second time—Alfred Stevens resumed the route which included Charlemont. But the devil had, by this time, found his way into the meditations of the youth, and lay lurking, unknown to himself, perhaps, at the bottom of this same curiosity. The look of pride and defiance which Margaret Cooper had betrayed, when the bold youth rode back to steal a second glance at her matchless person, was equivalent to an equally bold challenge; and his vanity hastily picked up the gauntlet which hers had thrown down. He wished to see the damsel again—to see if she *was* so beautiful—if she did, indeed, possess that intellectual strength and vivacity which flashed out so suddenly and with so much splendor from beneath her long, dark eye-lashes!

In this mood he met with John Cross; and the simplicity

of that worthy creature offered another challenge, not less provoking than the former, to the levity and love of mischief which also actively predominated in the bosom of the youth. Fond of a malicious sort of fun, and ever on the look-out for subjects of quizzing, it was in compliance with a purely habitual movement of his mind that he conjured up that false, glozing story of his religious inclinations, which had so easily imposed upon the unsuspecting preacher. Never was proceeding less premeditated, or so completely the result of an after-thought, than this; and now that it had proved so perfectly successful—now that he found himself admitted into the very heart of the little village, and into the bosoms of the people—he began, for the first time, to feel the awkwardness of the situation in which he had placed himself, and the responsibilities, if not dangers, to which it subjected him. To play the part of a mere preacher—to talk glibly, and with proper unction, in the stereotype phraseology of the profession—was no difficult matter to a clever young lawyer of the West, having a due share of the gift of gab, and almost as profoundly familiar with scripture quotation as Henry Clay himself. But there was something awkward in the idea of detection, and he was not unaware of those summary dangers which are likely to follow, in those wild frontier regions, from the discovery of so doubtful a personage as “Bro’ Wolf” in the clothing of a more innocent animal. Chief-Justice Lynch is a sacred authority in those parts; and, in such a case as his, Alfred Stevens did not doubt that the church itself would feel it only becoming to provide another sort of garment for the offender, which, whether pleasant or not, would at least be likely to stick more closely, and prove less comfortably warm.

But, once in, there was no help but to play out the game as it had been begun. Villagers are seldom very sagacious people, and elegant strangers are quite too much esteemed among them to make them very particular in knowing the

whys and wherefores about them—whence they come, what they do, and whither they propose to go. Stevens had only to preserve his countenance and a due degree of caution, and the rest was easy. He had no reason to suppose himself an object of suspicion to anybody; and should he become so, nothing was more easy than to take his departure with sufficient promptness, and without unnecessarily soliciting the prayers of the church in behalf of the hurried traveller! At all events, he could lose nothing by the visit: perhaps something might be gained.

What was that something? Behold him in his chamber, preparing to ask and to answer this question for himself. The sabbath-day is finally over. He has been almost the lion of the day. We say almost, for the worthy John Cross could not easily be deprived, by any rivalry, of the loyal regards of his old parishioners. But, though the latter had most friends, the stranger, Alfred Stevens, had had most followers. All were anxious to know him—the young, in particular, maidens and men; and the grave old dames would have given their last remaining teeth, bone or waxen, to have heard him discourse. There was so much sense and solemnity in his profound, devout looks! he has been made known to them all; he has shaken hands with many. But he has exchanged the speech of sympathy and feeling with but one only—and that one!—

Of her he thinks in his chamber—his quiet, snug, little chamber—a mere closet, looking out upon a long garden-slip, in which he sees, without much heeding them, long lanes of culinary cabbage, and tracts of other growing and decaying vegetation, in which his interest is quite too small to make it needful that he should even ask its separate names. His chin rests upon his hands with an air of meditation; and gradually his thoughts rise up in soliloquy, which is suffered to invade no ear but ours:—

“Well! who’d have thought it? a parson!—devilish good, indeed! How it will tell at Murkey’s! What a

metamorphose ! if it don't stagger 'em, nothing will ! It's the best thing I've done yet ! I shall have to do it over a hundred times, and must get up a sermon or two beforehand, and swear that I preached them—and, egad ! I may have to do it yet before I'm done—ha ! ha ! ha !”

The laughter was a quiet chuckle, not to be heard by vulgar ears ; it subsided in the gorges of his throat. The idea of really getting up a sermon tickled him. He muttered over texts, all that he could remember ; and proceeded to turn over the phrases for an introduction, such as, unctuous with good things in high degree, he fancied would be particularly commendable to his unsuspecting hearers. Alfred Stevens had no small talent for imitation. He derived a quiet sort of pleasure, on the present occasion, from its indulgence.

“I should have made a famous parson, and, if all trades fail, may yet. But, now that I am here, what's to come of it ? It's not so hard to put on a long face, and prose in scripture dialect ; but, *cui bono* ? Let me see—hem ! The girl is pretty, devilish pretty—with such an eye, and looks so ! There's soul in the wench—life—and a passion that speaks out in every glance and movement. A very Cressid, with a cross of Corinne ! Should she be like her of Troy ? At all events, it can do no harm to see what she's made of !

“But I must manage warily. I have something to lose in the business. Frankfort is but fifty miles from Charlemont—fifty miles—and there's Ellisland, but fourteen. Fourteen !—an easy afternoon ride. That way it must be done. Ellisland shall be my post-town. I can gallop there in an afternoon, drop and receive my letters, and be back by a round-about which shall effectually baffle inquiry. A week or two will be enough. I shall see, by that time, what can be done with her ; though still, cautiously, Parson Stevens !—cautiously.”

The farther cogitations of Stevens were subordinate to these, but of the same family complexion. They were

such as to keep him wakeful. The Bible which had been placed upon his table, by the considerate providence of his hostess, lay there unopened; though, more than once, he lifted the cover of the sacred volume, letting it fall again suddenly, as if with a shrinking consciousness that such thoughts as at that moment filled his mind were scarcely consistent with the employment, in any degree, of such a companion. Finally, he undressed and went to bed. The hour had become very late.

“Good young man,” muttered worthy Mrs. Hinkley to her drowsy spouse, in the apartment below, as she heard the movements of her guest—“good young man, he’s just now going to bed. He’s been studying all this while. I reckon Brother Cross has been sound this hour.”

The light from Stevens’s window glimmered out over the cabbage-garden, and was seen by many an ancient dame as she prepared for her own slumbers.

“Good young man,” said they all with one accord. “I reckon he’s at the Bible now. Oh! he’ll be a blessed laborer in the vineyard, I promise you, when Brother Cross is taken.”

“If it were not for the cursed bore of keeping up the farce beyond the possibility of keeping up the fun, such a rig as this would be incomparably pleasant; but”—yawning—“that’s the devil! I get monstrous tired of a joke that needs dry nursing!”

Such were the last muttered words of Parson Stevens before he yielded himself up to his slumbers. Good young man—charitable old ladies—gullible enough, if not charitable! But the professions need such people, and we must not quarrel with them!

CHAPTER VIII.

PAROCHIAL PERFORMANCES.

THE poor, conceited blackguards of this ungracious earth have a fancy that there must be huge confusion and a mighty bobbery in nature, corresponding with that which is for ever going on in their own little spheres. If we have a toothache, we look for a change of weather; our rheumatism is a sure sign that God has made his arrangements to give us a slapping rain; and, should the white bull or the brown heifer die, look out for hail, or thunderstorm, at least, as a forerunner of the event. Nothing less can possibly console or satisfy us for such a most unaccountable, not to say unnatural and unwarrantable, a dispensation. The poets have ministered largely to this vanity on the part of mankind. Shakspeare is constantly at it, and Ben Jonson, and all the dramatists. Not a butcher, in the whole long line of the butchering Cæsars, from Augustus down, but, according to them, died in a sort of gloom-glory, resulting from the explosion of innumerable stars and rockets, and the apparitions of as many comets! "Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire," invariably announce the coming stroke of fate; and five or seven moons of a night have suddenly arisen to warn some miserable sublu-narian that orders had been issued that there should be no moon for him that quarter, or, in military and more precise phrase, that he should have no "quarters" during that moon. Even our venerable and stern old puritan saint, Milton—

he who was blessed with the blindness of his earthly eye, that he should be more perfectly enabled to contemplate the Deity within—has given way to this superstition when he subjects universal nature to an earthquake because Adam's wife followed the counsels of the snake.

A pretty condition of things it would be, if stars, suns, and systems, were to shoot madly from their spheres on such occasions! Well might the devil laugh if such were the case! How he would chuckle to behold globes and seas, and empires, fall into such irreverend antics because some poor earthling, be he kingling or common sodling, goes into desuetude, either by the operation of natural laws, or the sharp application of steel or shot! Verily, it makes precious little difference to the Great Reaper, by what process we finally become harvested. He is sure of us, though no graves gape, no stars fall, no comets rush out, like young colts from their stables, flinging their tails into the faces of the more sober and pacific brotherhood of lights. But, denied the satisfaction of chuckling at such sights as these, his satanic majesty chuckles not the less at the human vanity which looks for them. Nay, he himself is very likely to suggest this vanity. It is one of his forms of temptation—one of his manœuvres; and we take leave, by way of warning, to hint to those worthy people, who judge of tomorrow's providence by the corns of their great toe, or their periodical lumbago, or the shooting of their warts, or the pricking of their palms, that it is in truth the devil which is at the bottom of all this, and that the Deity has nothing to do in the business. It is the devil instilling his vanities into the human heart, in that form which he thinks least likely to prove offensive, or rouse suspicion. The devil is most active in your affairs, Mrs. Thompson, the moment you imagine that there must be a revolution on your account in the universal laws of nature. At such a moment your best policy will be to have blood let, take physic, and go with all diligence to your prayers.

There was no sort of warning on the part of the natural to the moral world, on the day when Alfred Stevens set forth with the worthy John Cross, to visit the flock of the latter. There was not a lovelier morning in the whole calendar. The sun was alone in heaven, without a cloud; and on earth, the people in and about Charlemont, having been to church only the day before, necessarily made their appearance everywhere with petticoats and pantaloons tolerably clean and unrumpled. Cabbages had not yet been frost-bitten. Autumn had dressed up her children in the garments of beauty, preparatory to their funeral. There was a good crop of grain that year, and hogs were brisk, and cattle lively, and all "looking-up," in the language of the prices current. This was long before the time when Mr. M—— made his famous gammon speeches; but the people had a presentiment of what was coming, and to crown the eventful anticipations of the season, there was quite a freshet in Salt river. The signs were all and everywhere favorable. Speculation was beginning to chink his money-bags; three hundred new banks, as many railways, were about to be established; old things were about to fleet and disappear; all things were becoming new; and the serpent entered Charlemont, and made his way among the people thereof, without any signs of combustion, or overthrow, or earthquake.

Everybody has some tolerable idea of what the visitation of a parson is, to the members of his flock. In the big cities he comes one day, and the quarterly collector the next. He sits down with the "gude wife" in a corner to themselves, and he speaks to her in precisely the same low tones which cunning lovers are apt to use. If he knows any one art better than another, it is that of finding his way to the affections of the female part of his flock. A subdued tone of voice betrays a certain deference for the party addressed. The lady is pleased with such a preliminary. She is flattered again by the pains he takes in behalf

of her eternal interests ; she is pretty sure he takes no such pains with any of her neighbors. It is a sign that he thinks her soul the most becoming little soul in the flock, and when he goes away, she looks after him and sighs, and thinks him the most blessed soul of a parson. The next week she is the first to get up a subscription which she heads with her own name in connection with a sum realized by stinting her son of his gingerbread money, in order to make this excellent parson a life-member of the "Zion African Bible and Missionary Society, for disseminating the Word among the Heathen." The same fifty dollars so appropriated, would have provided fuel for a month to the starving poor of her own parish.

But Brother Cross gets no such windfalls. It is probable that he never heard of such a thing, and that if he did, he would unhesitatingly cry out, "Humbug," at the first intimation of it. Besides, his voice was not capable of that modulation which a young lover, or a city parson can give it. Accustomed to cry aloud and spare not, he usually spoke as if there were some marrow in his bones, and some vigor in his wind-bags. When he came to see the good wife of his congregation, he gave her a hearty shake of the hand, congratulated her as he found her at her spinning-wheel ; spoke with a hearty approbation, if he saw that her children were civil and cleanly ; if otherwise, he blazed out with proper boldness, by telling her that all her praying and groaning, would avail nothing for her soul's safety, so long as Jackey's breeches were unclean ; and that the mother of a rude and dirty child, was as sure of damnation, as if she never prayed at all. He had no scruples about speaking the truth. He never looked about him for the gentle, easy phrases, by which to distinguish the conduct which he was compelled to condemn. He knew not only that the truth must be spoken, and be spoken by him, if by anybody, but that there is no language too strong—perhaps none quite strong enough—for the utterance of the

truth. But it must not be supposed, that John Cross was in any respect an intolerant, or sour man. He was no hypocrite, and did not, therefore, need to clothe his features in the vinegar costume of that numerous class. His limbs were put into no such rigid fetters as too often denote the unnatural restraints which such persons have imposed upon their inner minds. He could laugh and sing with the merriest, and though he did not absolutely shake a leg himself, yet none rejoiced more than he, when Ned Hinkley's fiddle summoned the village to this primitive exercise.

"Now, Alfred Stevens," said he, the breakfast being over, "what say'st thou to a visit with me among my people. Some of them know thee already; they will all be rejoiced to see thee. I will show thee how they live, and if thou shouldst continue to feel within thee, the growing of that good seed whose quickening thou hast declared to me, it will be well that thou shouldst begin early to practise the calling which may so shortly become thine own. Here mightest thou live a space, toiling in thy spiritual studies, until the brethren should deem thee ripe for thy office; meanwhile, thy knowledge of the people with whom thou livest, and their knowledge of thee, would be matter of equal comfort and consolation, I trust, to thee as to them."

Alfred Stevens expressed himself pleased with the arrangement. Indeed, he desired nothing else.

"But shall we see all of them?" he demanded. 'The arch-hypocrite began to fear that his curiosity would be compelled to pay a heavy penalty to dullness.

"The flock is small," said John Cross. "A day will suffice, but I shall remain three days in Charlemont, and some I will see to-day, and some to-morrow, and some on the day after, which is Wednesday."

"Taken in moderate doses," murmured Stevens to himself, "one may stand it."

He declared himself in readiness, and the twain set

forth. The outward behavior of Stevens was very exemplary. He had that morning contrived to alter his costume in some respects to suit the situation of affairs. For example, he had adopted that slavish affectation which seems to insist that a preacher of God should always wear a white cravat, so constructed and worn as to hide the tips of his shirt collar. If they wore none, they would look infinitely more noble, and we may add, never suffer from *bronchitis*. In his deportment, Stevens was quite as sanctified as heart could wish. He spoke always deliberately, and with great unction. If he had to say "cheese and mousetrap," he would look very solemn, shake his head with great gravity and slowness, and then deliberately and equally emphasizing every syllable, would roll forth the enormous sentence with all the conscious dignity of an ancient oracle. That "cheese and mousetrap," so spoken, acquired in the ears of the hearer, a degree of importance and signification, which it confounded them to think they had never perceived before in the same felicitous collocation of syllables. John Cross was not without his vanities. Who is? Vanity is quite as natural as any other of our endowments. It is a guaranty for amiability. A vain man is always a conciliatory one. He is kind to others, because the approbation of others is a strong desire in his mind. Accordingly, even vanity is not wholly evil. It has its uses.

John Cross had his share, and Alfred Stevens soon discovered that he ministered to it in no small degree. The good old preacher took to himself the credit of having effected his conversion, so far as it had gone. It was his hand that had plucked the brand from the burning. He spoke freely of his *protégé*, as well before his face as behind his back. In his presence he dwelt upon the holy importance of his calling; to others he dilated upon the importance of securing for the church a young man of so much talent, yet of so much devotion: qualities not always

united, it would seem, among the churchlings of modern times.

Alfred Stevens seemed to promise great honor to his teacher. That cunning which is the wisdom of the worldling, and which he possessed in a very surprising degree, enabled him to adopt a course of conduct, look, and remark, which amply satisfied the exactions of the scrupulous, and secured the unhesitating confidence of those who were of a more yielding nature. He soon caught the phraseology of his companion, and avoiding his intensity, was less likely to offend his hearers. His manner was better subdued to the social tone of ordinary life, his voice lacked the sharp twang of the backwoods man ; and, unlike John Cross, he was able to modulate it to those undertones, which, as we have before intimated, are so agreeable from the lips of young lovers and fashionable preachers. At all events, John Cross himself, was something more than satisfied with his pupil, and took considerable pains to show him off. He was a sort of living and speaking monument of the good man's religious prowess.

It does not need that we should follow the two into all the abodes which they were compelled to visit. The reader would scarcely conceal his yawns though Stevens did. Enough, that a very unctuous business was made of it that morning. Many an old lady was refreshed with the spiritual beverage bestowed in sufficient quantity to last for another quarter ; while many a young one rejoiced in the countenance of so promising a shepherd as appeared under the name of Alfred Stevens. But the latter thought of the one damsel only. He said many pleasant things to those whom he did see ; but his mind ran only upon one. He began to apprehend that she might be among the flock who were destined to wait for the second or last day's visitation ; when, to his great relief, John Cross called his attention to the dwelling of the widow Cooper, to whom they were fast approaching.

Stevens remarked that the dwelling had very much the appearance of poverty—he did not fail to perceive that it lacked the flower-garden in front which distinguished the greater number of the cottages in Charlemont; and there was an appearance of coldness and loneliness about its externals which impressed itself very strongly upon his thoughts, and seemed to speak unfavorably for the taste of the inmates. One is apt to associate the love of flowers with sweetness and gentleness of disposition, and such a passion would seem as natural, as it certainly would be becoming, to a young lady of taste and sensibility. But the sign is a very doubtful one. Taste and gentleness may satisfy themselves with other objects. A passion for books is very apt to exclude a very active passion for flowers, and it will be found, I suspect, that these persons who are most remarkable for the cultivation of flowers are least sensible to the charms of letters. It seems monstrous, indeed, that a human being should expend hours and days in the nursing and tendance of such stupid beauties as plants and flowers, when earth is filled with so many lovelier objects that come to us commended by the superior sympathies which belong to humanity. Our cities are filled with the sweetest orphans—flowers destined to be immortal; angels in form, that might be angels in spirit—that must be, whether for good or evil—whom we never cultivate—whom we suffer to escape our tendance, and leave to the most pitiable ignorance, and the most wretched emergencies of want. The life that is wasted upon dahlias, must, *prima facie*, be the life of one heartless and insensible, and most probably, brutish in a high degree.

But Alfred Stevens had very little time for further reflection. They were at the door of the cottage. Never did the widow Cooper receive her parson in more tidy trim, and with an expression of less qualified delight. She brought forth the best chair, brushed the deerskin-seat with her apron, and having adjusted the old man to her own satis-

faction as well as his, she prepared to do a like office for the young one. Having seated them fairly, and smoothed her apron, and gone through the usual preliminaries, and placed herself a little aloof, on a third seat, and rubbed her hands, and struggled into a brief pause in her brisk action, she allowed her tongue to do the office for which her whole soul was impatient.

“Oh, Brother Cross, what a searching sermon you gave us yesterday. You stirred the hearts of everybody, I warrant you, as you stirred up mine. We’ve been a needing it for a precious long time, I tell you; and there’s no knowing what more’s a wanting to make us sensible to the evil that’s in us. I know from myself what it is, and I guess from the doings of others. We’re none of us perfect, that’s certain; but it’s no harm to say that some’s more and some’s not so perfect as others. There’s a difference in sin, Brother Cross, I’m a thinking, and I’d like you to explain why, and what’s the difference. One won’t have so much, and one will have more; one will take a longer spell of preaching, and half the quantity will be a dose to work another out clean, entire. I’m not boastful for myself, Brother Cross, but I do say, I’d give up in despair if I thought it took half so much to do me, as it would take for a person like that Mrs. Thackeray.”

“Sister Cooper,” said brother Cross, rebukingly, “beware of the temptation to vain-glory. Be not like the Pharisee, disdainful of the publican. To be too well pleased with one’s self is to be displeasing to the Lord.”

“Oh, Brother Cross, don’t be thinking that I’m over and above satisfied with the goodness that’s in me. I know I’m not so good. I have a great deal of evil; but then it seems to me there’s a difference in good and a difference in evil. One has most of one and one has most of another. None of us have much good, and all of us have a great deal of sin. God help me, for I need his help—I have my own

share ; but as for that Mrs. Thackeray, she's as full of wickedness as an an egg's full of meat."

"It is not the part of Christianity, Sister Cooper," said John Cross mildly, "to look into our neighbors' accounts and make comparisons between their doings and our own. We can only do so at great risk of making a false reckoning. Besides, Sister Cooper, it is business enough on our hands, if we see to our own short-comings. As for Mrs. Thackeray, I have no doubt she's no better than the rest of us, and we are all, as you said before, children of suffering, and prone to sin as certain as that the sparks fly upward. We must only watch and pray without ceasing, particularly that we may not deceive ourselves with the most dangerous sin of being too sure of our own works. The good deeds that we boast of so much in our earthly day will shrivel and shrink up at the last account to so small a size that the best of us, through shame and confusion, will be only too ready to call upon the rocks and hills to cover us. We are very weak and foolish all, Sister Cooper. We can't believe ourselves too weak, or too mean, or too sinful. To believe this with all our hearts, and to try to be better with all our strength, is the true labor of religion. God send it to us, in all its sweetness and perfection, so that we may fight the good fight without ceasing."

"But if you could only hear of the doings of Mrs. Thackeray, Brother Cross, you'd see how needful it would be to put forth all your strength to bring her back to the right path."

"The Lord will know. None of us can hide our evil from the eyes of the Lord. I will strive with our sister, when I seek her, which will be this very noon, but it is of yourself, Sister Cooper, and your daughter Margaret, that I would speak. Where is she that I see her not?"

This was the question that made our *quasi* hierophant look up with a far greater degree of interest than he had felt in the long and random twattle to which he had been

compelled to listen. Where was she — that fair daughter? He was impatient for the answer. But he was not long detained in suspense. Next to her neighbors there was no subject of whom the mother so loved to speak as the daughter, and the daughter's excellences.

"Ah! she is up-stairs, at her books, as usual.. she does so love them books, Brother Cross, I'm afraid it'll do harm to her health. She cares for nothing half so well. Morning, noon, and night, all the same, you find her poring over them; and even when she goes out to ramble, she must have a book, and she wants no other company. For my part I can't see what she finds in them to love so; for except to put a body to sleep I never could see the use they were to any person yet."

"Books are of two kinds," said Brother Cross gravely. "They are useful or hurtful. The useful kinds are good, the hurtful kinds are bad. The Holy Bible is the first book, and the only book, as I reckon it will be the book that'll live longest. The 'Life of Whitefield' is a good book, and I can recommend the sermons of that good man, Brother Peter Cummins, that preached when I was a lad, all along through the back parts of North Carolina, into South Carolina and Georgia. I can't say that he came as far back into the west as these parts; but he was a most faithful shepherd. There was a book of his sermons printed for the benefit of his widow and children. He died, like that blessed man, John Rogers, that we see in the primer-books, leaving a wife with eleven children and one at the breast. His sermons are very precious reading. One of them in particular, on the Grace of God, is a very falling of manna in the wilderness. It freshens the soul, and throws light upon the dark places in the wilderness. Ah! if only such books were printed, what a precious world for poor souls it would be. But they print a great many bad books now-a-days."

The natural love of mischief which prevailed in the bosom of Alfred Stevens now prompted him to take part in the

conversation at this happy moment. The opportunity was a tempting one.

"The printers," said he, "are generally very bad men. They call themselves devils, and take young lads and bring them up to their business under that name!"

The old lady threw up her hands, and John Cross, to whom this intelligence was wholly new, inquired with a sort of awe-struck gravity —

"Can this be true, Alfred Stevens? Is this possible?"

"The fact, sir. They go by no other name among themselves; and you may suppose, if they are not ashamed of the name, they are not unwilling to perform the doings of the devil. Indeed, they are busy doing his business from morning to night — and night to morning. They don't stop for the sabbath. They work on Sunday the same as any other day, and if they take any rest at all it is on Saturday, which would show them to be a kind of Jews."

"Good Lord deliver us!" ejaculated the widow.

"Where, O! where?" exclaimed the Brother Cross with similar earnestness. The game was too pleasant for Alfred Stevens. He pursued it.

"In such cities," he continued, "as New York and Philadelphia, thousands of these persons are kept in constant employ sending forth those books of falsehood and folly which fill the hearts of the young with vain imaginings, and mislead the footsteps of the unwary. In one of these establishments, four persons preside, who are considered brothers; but they are brothers in sin only, and are by some supposed to be no other. They have called themselves after the names of saints and holy men; even the names of the thrice blessed apostles, John and James, have been in this fashion abused; but if it be true that the spirits of evil may even in our day as of old embody themselves in mortal shape for the better enthralling and destruction of mankind, then should I prefer to believe that these persons were no other than the evil demons who ruled in Ashdod and Assyria.

Such is their perseverance in evil — such their busy industry, which keeps a thousand authors (which is but another name for priests and prophets) constantly at work to frame cunning falsehoods and curious devices, and winning fancies, which when printed and made into books, turn the heads of the young and unwary, and blind the soul to the wrath which is to come.”

The uplifted hands of the widow Cooper still attested her wonder.

“Lord save us!” she exclaimed, “I should not think it strange if Sister Thackeray had some of these very books. Do ask, Brother Cross, when you go to see her. She speaks much of books, and I see her reading them whenever I look in at the back window.”

John Cross did not seem to give any heed to the remark of the old woman. There was a theological point involved in one of the remarks of Alfred Stevens which he evidently regarded as of the first importance.

“What you say, Alfred Stevens, is very new and very strange to me, and I should think from what I already know of the evil which is sometimes put in printed books, that there was indeed a spirit of malice at work in this way, to help the progress and the conquests of Satan among our blind and feeble race. But I am not prepared to believe that God has left it to Satan to devise so fearful a scheme for prosecuting his evil designs as that of making the demons of Ashdod and Assyria take the names of mortal men, while seeming to follow mortal occupations. It would be fearful tidings for our poor race were this so. But if so, is it not seen that there is a difference in the shapes of these persons. If either of these brothers who blasphemously call themselves John and James, after the manner of the apostles, shall be in very truth and certainty that Dagon of the Philistines whom Jehovah smote before his altar, will he not be made fishlike from the waist downward, and will this not be seen by his followers and some of the thousands whom he daily

perverts to his evil purposes and so leads to eternal destruction?"

"It may be that it is permitted to such a demon to put on what shape he thinks proper," replied Stevens; "but even if it is not, yet this would not be the subject of any difference—it would scarcely prevent the prosecution of this evil purpose. You are to remember, Mr. Cross—"

"John Cross—plain John Cross, Alfred Stevens," was the interruption of the preacher.

"You are to remember," Stevens resumed, "that when the heart is full of sin, the eyes are full of blindness. The people who believe in these evil beings are incapable of seeing their deformities."

"That is true—a sad truth."

"And, again," continued Stevens, "there are devices of mere mortal art, by which the deformities and defects of an individual may be concealed. One of these brothers, I am told, is never to be seen except seated in one position at the same desk, and this desk is so constructed, as to hide his lower limbs in great part, while still enabling him to prosecute his nefarious work."

"It's clear enough, Brother Cross," exclaimed the widow Cooper, now thoroughly convinced—"it's clear enough that there's something that he wants to hide. Lord help us! but these things are terrible."

"To the weak and the wicked, Sister Cooper, they are, as you say, terrible, and hence the need that we should have our lamps trimmed and lighted, for the same light which brings us to the sight of the Holy of Holies, shows us the shape of hatefulness, the black and crouching form of Satan, with nothing to conceal his deformity. Brother Stevens has well said that when the heart is full of sin, the eyes are full of blindness; and so we may say that when the heart is full of godliness, the eyes are full of seeing. You can not blind them with devilish arts. You can not delude them as to the true forms of Satan, let him take any shape.

The eye of godliness sees clean through the mask of sin, as the light of the sun pierces the thickest cloud, and brings day after the darkest night."

"Oh! what a blessed thing to hear you say so."

"More blessed to believe, Sister Cooper, and believing, to pray with all your heart for this same eye of godliness. But we should not only pray but work. Working for God is the best sort of prayer. We must do something in his behalf: and this reminds me, Sister Cooper, that if there is so much evil spread abroad in these books, we should look heedfully into the character of such as fall into the hands of the young and the unmindful of our flock."

"That is very true; that is just what I was thinking of, Brother Cross. You can not look too close, I'm thinking into such books as you'll find at the house of Widow Thackeray. I can give a pretty 'cute guess where she gets all that sort of talk, that seems so natural at the end of her tongue."

"Verily, I will speak with Sister Thackeray on this subject," responded the pastor—"but your own books, Sister Cooper, and those of your daughter Margaret—if it is convenient, I should prefer to examine them now while I am here."

"What! Margaret's books! examine Margaret's books!"

"Even so, while I am present and while Brother Stevens is here, also, to give me his helping counsel in the way of judgment."

"Why, bless us, Brother Cross, you don't suppose that my daughter Margaret would keep any but the properest books? she's too sensible, I can tell you, for that. She's no books but the best; none, I'll warrant you, like them you'll find at Widow Thackeray's. She's not to be put off with bad books. She goes through 'em with a glance of the eye. Ah! she's too smart to be caught by the contrivances of those devils, though in place of four brothers there was four thousand of 'em. No, no! let her alone for that—she's a match for the best of 'em."

"But as Brother Stevens said," continued John Cross, "where sin gets into the heart, the eye is blinded to the truth. Now——"

"Her eye's not blinded, Brother Cross, I can tell you. They can't cheat her with their books. She has none but the very best. I'll answer for them. None of them ever did me any harm; and I reckon none of them 'll ever hurt her. But I'm mistaken, if you don't have a real burning when you get to Mrs. Thackeray's."

"But, Sister Cooper——" commenced the preacher.

"Yes, Brother Cross," replied the dame.

"Books, as I said before, are of two kinds."

"Yes, I know — good and bad — I only wonder there's no indifferent ones among 'em," replied the lady.

"They should be examined for the benefit of the young and ignorant."

"Oh, yes, and for more besides, for Mrs. Thackeray's not young, that's clear enough; and I know there's a good many things that she's not ignorant of. She's precious knowing about many things that don't do her much good; and if the books could unlearn her, I'd say for one let her keep 'em. But as for looking at Margaret's books — why, Brother Cross, you surely know Margaret?"

The preacher answered meekly, but negatively.

"Ain't she about the smartest girl you ever met with?" continued the mother.

"God has certainly blessed her with many gifts," was the reply, "but where the trust is great, the responsibility is great also."

"Don't she know it?"

"I trust she does, Sister Cooper."

"You may trust every bit of it. She's got the smartness, the same as it is in books——"

"But the gift of talents, Sister Cooper, is a dangerous gift."

"I don't see, Brother Cross, how good things that come from God can be dangerous things."

“If I could see the books, Sister Cooper;—I say not that they are evil——”

John Cross began in tones that denoted something like despair; certainly dissatisfaction was in them, when Alfred Stevens, who had long since tired of what was going on, heard a light footfall behind him. He turned his eyes and beheld the fair maiden, herself, the propriety of whose reading was under discussion, standing in the doorway. It appeared that she had gathered from what had reached her ears, some knowledge of what was going on, for a smile of ineffable scorn curled her classic and nobly-chiselled mouth, while her brow was the index to a very haughty volume. In turning, Alfred Stevens betrayed to her the playful smile upon his own lips—their eyes met, and that single glance established a certain understanding between them.

Her coming did not avail to stifle the subject of discussion. John Cross was too resolute in the prosecution of his supposed duty, to give up the cause he had once undertaken. He had all the inveteracy of the stout old puritan. The usual introduction over and he resumed, though he now addressed himself to the daughter rather than the mother. She scarcely heard him to the end.

“The books were my father’s, Mr. Cross; they are valuable to me on that account. They are dear to me on their own. They are almost my only companions, and though I believe you would find nothing in them which might be held detrimental, yet I must confess, if there were, I should be sorry to be made acquainted with the fact. I have not yet discovered it myself, and should be loath to have it shown by another.”

“But you will let me see them, Margaret?”

“Yes, sir, whenever you please. I can have no objection to that, but if by seeing them you only desire an opportunity to say what I shall read and what not, I can only tell you that your labor will be taken in vain. Indeed, the evil

is already done. I have not a volume which I have not read repeatedly."

It is needless to add that Brother Cross was compelled to forego his book examination at the widow Cooper's, though strongly recommended there to press it at Widow Thackeray's. Alfred Stevens was a mute observer during the interview, which did not last very long after the appearance of Margaret. He was confirmed in all his previous impressions of her beauty, nor did the brevity of the conference prevent him from perceiving her intense self-esteem, which under certain influences of temperament is only another name for vanity. Besides they had exchanged glances which were volumes, rendering unnecessary much future explanation. She had seen that he was secretly laughing at the simple preacher, and that was a source of sympathy between them. She was very much in the habit of doing the same thing. He, on the other hand, was very well satisfied that the daughter of such a mother must be perverse and vain; and he was moralist enough to know that there is no heart so accessible to the tempter as the proud and wilful heart. But few words had passed between them, but those were expressive, and they both parted, with the firm conviction that they must necessarily meet again.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE TOAD GRINS UPON THE ALTAR.

SHALL we go the rounds with our pastor? Shall we look in upon him at Mrs. Thackeray's, while, obeying the suggestion of the widow Cooper, he purges her library of twenty volumes, casting out the devils and setting up the true gods? It is scarcely necessary. Enough to know that, under his expurgatorial finger, our beloved and bosom friend, William Shakspeare, was the first to suffer. Plays! The one word was enough. Some lying histories were permitted to escape. The name of history saved them! Robinson Crusoe was preserved as a true narrative; and Swift's Tale of a Tub escaped, as it was assumed (there being no time to read any of the books, and in this respect John Cross showed himself much more of a professional critic than he conjectured) to be a treatise on one branch of the cooperage business, and so, important to domestic mechanics in a new country. The reader will remember the manner in which the library of the knight of La Mancha was disposed of. He would err, however, if he supposed that John Cross dismissed the books from the window, or did anything farther than simply to open the eyes of Mrs. Thackeray to the bad quality of some of the company she kept. That sagacious lady did not think it worth while to dispute the *ipse dixit* of a teacher so single-minded, if not sagacious. She bowed respectfully to all his suggestions, promised no longer to bestow her smiles on the undeserving—a promise

of no small importance when it is remembered that, at thirty-three, Mrs. Thackeray was for the first time a widow—and that night she might have been seen laughing heartily with Mesdames Ford and Quickly at the amorous pertinacity of the baffled knight of Eastcheap.

Under the paternal wing of John Cross, Alfred Stevens obtained the desired *entrée* into the bosom of the flock. He was everywhere admitted with gladness—everywhere welcomed as to a home; and the unsophisticated old teacher by whose agency this was effected, congratulated his congregation and himself, on leaving the village, that he had left in it a person so full of grace, and one who, with the blessing of God, was so likely to bring about the birth of grace in others. The good old man bestowed long and repeated counsels upon his neophyte. The course of study which he prescribed was very simple. The Bible was the Alpha and the Omega—it was the essential whole. It would be well to read other books if they could be had—Clarke and Wesley were, of course, spoken of—but they could be done without. The word of God was in the one volume, and it needed no help from commentators to win its way and suffice the hungering and thirsting soul.

“If you could lay hands upon the book of sermons written by Brother Peter Cummins, which his wife had printed, I’m thinking it would serve, next to God’s own blessed word, to put you in the right way. It’s been a great helping to me, Alfred Stevens, that same book of sermons; and I reckon it’s because it’s so good a book that it’s not printed now. I don’t see it much about. But I’ll get you one if I can, and bring or send it to you, soon enough to help you to the wisdom that you’re a seeking after. If it only wakes the spirit in you as it did in me—if it only stirs you up with the spirit of divine love—you’ll find it easy enough to understand the teachings of the holy volume. All things become clear in that blessed light. By its help you read, and by its working you inwardly digest all the needful

learning. The Lord be with you, Alfred Stevens, and bring to perfect ripening your present undertaking."

"Amen!" was the solemn response of the hypocrite, but we need not say what an irreverent and unholy thought lay at the bottom of his mind in making this ejaculation.

Before the departure of John Cross, the latter had made terms with Squire Hinkley for the board and lodging of Brother Stevens and his horse. Hinkley would have preferred taking nothing, considering the praiseworthy purpose of the supposed theological student; but Stevens shrunk from receiving such an obligation with a feeling of pride, which yet had no scruples at practising so wretched an imposture. He insisted upon making compensation, or upon leaving the house; and, not to incur this risk, Hinkley consented to receive a weekly sum in payment; but the charge was considerably smaller, as we may suppose, than it would have been had the lodger simply appeared as an inoffensive traveller, practising no fraud and making no professions of religion.

Having effected all these arrangements, to his own satisfaction and seemingly that of all others, John Cross departed once more into the wilderness on his single-hearted ministry of love. A sturdy and an honest worker was he in the tabernacle, with a right mind if not a very wise one; and doing more good in his generation, and after the fashion of his strength, than is often permitted to the stall-fed doctors of his vocation.

The reader will suppose that the old man has been already gone some seven days. Meanwhile, the young student has fairly made himself at home in Charlemont. He has a snug room, entirely to himself, at Squire Hinkley's, and, by the excellent care of the worthy dame, it is provided with the best bedding and the finest furniture. Her own hands sweep it clean, morning and night, for the incipient parson; she makes up the bed, and, in customary phrase, puts it in all respects to rights. His wants are an-

ticipated, his slightest suggestion met with the most prompt consideration; and John Cross himself, humble and unexact as he was, might have felt some little twinges of mortal envy could he have known that his *protégé* promised to become a much greater favorite than himself.

This, indeed, seemed very likely to be the case. A good young man in the sight of the ladies is always a more attractive person than a good old man. Dame Hinkley, though no longer young herself, remembered that she had been so, and preserved all her sympathies, in consequence, for young people. She thought Alfred Stevens so handsome, and he smiled so sweetly, and he spoke so gently, and, in short, so great had been his progress in the affections of his hostess in the brief space of a single week, that we are constrained to confess ourselves rejoiced that she herself was an old woman, as well on her own account as on that of her worthy spouse.

Her good man was very well satisfied, whether from confidence or indifference, that such should be the case. Her attentions to the young stranger probably diverted them from himself. But not so with William Hinkley—the son. We have already had some glimpses of the character of this young man. We may now add that the short week's residence of Stevens in Charlemont had increased the soreness at his heart. In that week he had seen fairly established that intimacy between his rival and the lady of his love which seemed to give the death-blow to any pretensions of his. He had seen them meet; had seen them go forth together; beheld their mutual eyes, and, turning his own inward, saw how deeply his heart was concerned in the probable sympathies of theirs. Then, to turn to his own habitation, and to behold *that*, mother and all, devoted to the same absolute stranger; to pass unheeded in the presence of those whom he best loved—over whom natural ties gave him inalienable rights; to feel himself put aside for one only known of yesterday; to look with yearning,

and meet eyes only of disregard and indifference! Such being the suggestions of his jealous and suffering nature, it is surely no matter of wonder that the youth grew melancholy and abstracted.

Our adventurer was snugly seated in the little but select chamber which had been given him in the house of Squire Hinkley. A table, neatly spread with a cotton cover, stood before him: a travelling-portfolio was opened beneath his hand, with a broad sheet of paper, already well written over, and waiting nothing but his signature, and perhaps the postscript. He was absorbed unusually in his cogitations, and nibbled into bits the feathery end of the gray goosequill of which he had been making such excellent use. While he meditates, unseeing, we will use the liberty of an old acquaintance to scan the letter—for such it is—which he has been writing. Perhaps we shall gather from it some matters which it may concern us yet to know:—

“DEAR BARNABAS: The strangest adventure—positively the very strangest—that ever happened to a son of Murkey’s, will keep me from the embraces of the brethren a few weeks longer. I am benighted, bewildered, taken with art-magic, transmuted, *transmogrified*, not myself nor yet another, but, as they say in Mississippi, ‘a sort of betweenity.’ Fancy me suddenly become a convert to the bluest presbyterianism, as our late excellent brother Woodford became, when he found that he could not get Moll Parkinson on any other terms—and your guess will not be very far from the true one. I am suddenly touched with conviction. I have seen a light on my way from Tarsus. The scales have fallen from my eyes. I have seen the wickedness of my ways, and yours too, you dog; and, having resolved on my own repentance, I am taking lessons which shall enable me to effect yours. Precious deal of salt will it need for that! Salt river will fall, while its value rises. But the glory of the thing --- think of that, my boy! What a triumph it will

be to revolutionize Murkey's!—to turn out the drinkers, and smokers, and money-changers; to say, 'Hem! my brethren, let us pay no more taxes to sin in this place!' There shall be no more cakes and ale. Ginger shall have no heat i' the mouth there; and, in place of smoking meats and tobacco, give you nothing but smoking methodism! Won't that be a sight and a triumph which shall stir the dry bones in our valley—ay, and bones not so dry? There shall be a quaking of the flesh in sundry places. Flam will perish in the first fit of consternation; and if Joe Burke's sides do not run into sop and jelly, through the mere humor of the thing, then prophecy is out of its element quite.

"Seriously, you dog, I have become a theological student! Don't you see proofs of my progress in my unctuous phraseology. I was taken suddenly upon the highway—a brand plucked from the burning—and to be stuck up on high, still lighted, however, as a sort of lantern and lighthouse to other wayfarers—wandering rogues like yourself, who need some better lights than your own if it only be to show you how to sin decently. I am professedly a convert to the true faith, though which that is, I think, has not well been determined among you at Murkey's, or, indeed, anywhere else. I believe the *vox populi, vox Dei*, still comprises the only wholesome decision which has yet been made on the subject. The popular vote here declares it to be methodism; with you it is baptism or presbyterianism—which? I am a flexible student, however, and when I meet you again at Murkey's, shall be prepared to concur with the majority.

"But, in sober fact, I am a professor—actually recognised by my neighbors as one of the elect—set apart to be and do mighty things. How I came so, will call for a long story, which I defer to another occasion. Enough to tell you that an accidental rencontre with a silly old preacher (whose gullet I filled with raw brandy, which I recommended to him, under another name, as a sovereign.

remedy against flatulence, and which nearly strangled him, he took such a premeditated swallow), brought me into one of the loveliest little villages in all this western country, and there I saw many things—among others—a woman!—

“A woman!—that one word, you dog, will explain the mystery—will show you why I am thus transmuted, *transmogrified*, and in ‘a state of betweenity.’ Nothing less, I assure you, could make me disguise myself after the present fashion; wear the sanctimonious and sour phiz which the common law of modern religion prescribes, and keep me much longer from the pleasanter communion of such glorious imps, as I suppose, are, even now, beginning to gather in the dingy smoke-room of our sovereign Murkey. But this woman, you will ask. Ay, ay, but you shall have no answer yet. It shall be enough for you that she is a queen of Sheba, after her own fashion. A proud, imperious, passionate creature—tall, really beautiful—and so majestic! You should see the flashing of her eyes to know what sort of a thing is moral lightning. Her face kindles up in an instant. She is an intensifier, and like most such, cursedly smart. Young too—scarce eighteen, I think; queer too—almost tyrannical at times—but full of blood, of unregulated passions, moody, capricious, and, of course, easy game, if the sportsman knows anything of the habits of the bird. She is a country-girl, but no hoyden. Her intensity of character, her pride and great self-esteem, have made her a solitary. Unsophisticated in some respects, she is yet not to be surprised. In solitude, and a taste for it, she has acquired a sort of moral composure which makes her secure against surprise. I am really taken with the girl, and *could* love her, I tell you—nay, do love her—so long as love can keep himself—out of a state of bondage! I do not think, at this moment, that I shall violate any of the laws of the conventicle, like small-witted Brother Woodford; though, so far as the woman is concerned, I

should leave it without argument to the free vote of all the Lads of Fancy that ever gather round Murkey's round table, if my justification for turning traitor, would not prove immeasurably more complete than his.

"So! so! There are bones enough for you to crunch, you professional bandog. I had not meant to tell you half so much. There is some danger that one may lose his game altogether, if he suffers his nose to point unnecessarily to the cover where it lies. I know what keen scents are in the club, some of which would be on my track in no time if they knew where to find me; but I shall baffle you, you villains. My post-town is fifty miles from the place where I pursue my theological studies; you are too wise to attempt a wild-goose chase. You may smack your chaps, Barney, with envy; bite them too if you please, and it will only whet my own sense of pleasure to fancy your confusion, and your hopeless denunciations in the club. I shall be back in time for term—meanwhile get the papers in readiness. Write to me at the post-town of Ellisland, and remember to address me as Alfred Stevens—nay, perhaps, you may even say, 'Rev. Alfred Stevens,' it will grace the externals of the document with a more unctuous aspect, and secure the recipient a more wholesome degree of respect. Send all my letters to this town under envelope with this direction. I wrote you twice from Somerville. Did I tell you that old Hunks has been deused liberal? I can laugh at the small terms, yet go to Murkey's and shine through the smoke with the best of you. I solicit the prayers of the Round Table.

"Faithfully, yours, &c."

So far our profligate had written to his brother profligate, when a tap was heard at the entrance of his chamber. Thrusting the written papers into his portfolio, he rose, and opening the door discovered his hostess at the entrance.

"I came, Brother Stevens," said the old lady, "if you

were not too busy in your studies, to have a little talk with you, and to get your counsel upon a subject that a little distresses me. But you look as if you were busy now——”

“Not too busy, Mrs. Hinkley, to oblige you in this or in any other respect,” replied the guest with suitable suavity of expression——“shall I attend you down stairs.”

“Oh! no! it won’t need,” said she. “I’ll take a seat with you awhile. We shall be less liable to interruption here.”

Stevens scarcely repressed his smile, but the seniority of the old lady made her proceedings very innocent, however much they might have been adverse to the rules. He threw wide the door, and without more hesitation she followed him at once into the chamber.

CHAPTER X.

THE MOTHER'S GRIEFS.

THE business upon which Mrs. Hinkley sought the chamber of her guest was a very simple one, and easily expressed. Not that she expressed it in few words. That is scarcely possible at any time with an ancient lady. But the long story which she told, when compressed into intelligible form, related to her son William. She had some maternal fears on his account. The lad was a decided melancholic. His appetite was bad; his looks were thin and unhappy; he lacked the usual spirit of youth; he lacked his own usual spirit. What was the cause of the change which had come over him so suddenly, she could not divine. Her anxiety was for the remedy. She had consulted Brother Cross on the subject before he departed; but that good man, after a brief examination of the patient, had freely admitted his inability to say what was the matter with him, and what was proper for his cure. To the object of this solicitude himself, he had given much good counsel, concluding finally with a recommendation to read devoutly certain chapters in Job and Isaiah. It appears that William Hinkley submitted to all this scrutiny with exemplary fortitude, but gave no satisfactory answers to any of the questions asked him. He had no complaints, he denied any suffering; and expressed himself annoyed at the inquisition into his thoughts and feelings. This annoyance had been expressed, however, with the subdued

tones and language of one habitually gentle and modest. Whenever he was approached on the subject, as the good old lady assured her guest, he shook off his questioners with no little haste, and took to the woods for the rest of the day. "That day," said she, "you needn't look for William Hinkley to his dinner."

Stevens had been struck with the deportment of this youth, which had seemed to him haughty and repulsive; and, as he fancied, characterized by some sentiment of hostility for himself. He was surprised therefore to learn from the old lady that the lad was remarkable for his gentleness.

"How long has he been in this way, Mrs. Hinkley?" he asked with some curiosity.

"Well now, Brother Stevens, I can't tell you. It's been growing on him for some time. I reckon it's a matter of more than four months since I first seen it; but it's only been a few weeks that I have spoken to him. Brother Cross spoke to him only Monday of last week. My old man don't seem to see so much of it; but I know there's a great change in him now from what there used to be. A mother's eye sees a great way farther into the hearts of her children, Brother Stevens, than any other persons; and I can see plainly that William is no more the same boy — no! nor nothing like it — that he once was. Why, once, he was all life, and good humor; could dance and sing with the merriest among them; and was always so good and kind, and loved to do whatever would please a body; and was always with somebody, or other, making merry, and planning the prettiest sports. Now, he don't sing, nor dance, nor play; when you see him, you 'most always see him alone. He goes by himself into the woods, and he'll be going over the hills all day, nobody with him, and never seeming to care about his food, and what's more strange, never looking at the books that he used to be so fond of."

"He has been fond of books, then — had he many?"

“Oh, yes, a whole drawer of them, and he used to get them besides from the schoolmaster, Mr. Calvert, a very good man that lives about half a mile from the village, and has a world of books. But now he neither gets books from other people nor reads what he’s got. I’m dubious, Brother Stevens, that he’s read too much for his own good. Something’s not right here, I’m a thinking.”

The good old lady touched her head with her finger and in this manner indicated her conjecture as to the seat of her son’s disease. Stevens answered her encouragingly.

“I scarcely think, Mrs. Hinkley, that it can be anything so bad. The young man is at that age when a change naturally takes place in the mind and habits. He wants to go into the world, I suspect. He’s probably tired of doing nothing. What is to be his business? It’s high time that such a youth should have made a choice.”

“That’s true, Brother Stevens, but he’s been the apple to our eyes, and we haven’t been willing that he should take up any business that would carry him away from us. He’s done a little farming about the country, but that took him away, and latterly he’s kept pretty much at home, going over his books and studying, now one and now another, just as Mr. Calvert gave them to him.”

“What studies did he pursue?”

“Well, I can’t tell you. He was a good time at Latin, and then he wants to be a lawyer;—”

“A lawyer!”

“Yes, he had a great notion to be a lawyer and was at his books pretty hard for a good year, constant, day by day, until, as I said before, about four months ago, when I saw that he was growing thin, and that he had put down the books altogether, and had the change come over him just as I told you. You see how thin he is now. You’d scarce believe him to be the same person if you’d seen him then. Why his cheeks were as full and as red as roses, and his eye was always shining and laughing, and he had the live-

fiest step, and between him and Ned Hinkley, his cousin, what with flute and fiddle, they kept the house in a constant uproar, and we were all so happy. Now, it isn't once a month that we hear the sound of the fiddle in the house. He never sings, and he never dances, and he never plays, and what little he lets us see of him, is always so sad and so spiritless that I feel heartsick whenever I look upon him. Oh! Brother Stevens, if you could only find out what's the matter, and tell us what to do, it would be the most blessed kindness, and I'd never forget it, or forget you, to my dying-day."

"Whatever I can do, Mrs. Hinkley, shall surely be done. I will see and speak with your son."

"Oh! do — that's a dear good sir. I'm sure if you only talk to him and advise him it will do him good."

"Without being so sure, ma'am, I will certainly try to please you. Though I think you see the matter with too serious eyes. Such changes are natural enough to young people, and to old ones too. But what may be your son's age."

"Nineteen last April."

"Quite a man for his years, Mrs. Hinkley."

"Isn't he?"

"He will do you credit yet."

"Ah! if I could believe so. But you'll speak to him, Brother Stevens? You'll try and bring all to rights?"

"Rely upon me to do what I can; — to do my best."

"Well, that's as much as any man can do, and I'm sure I'll be so happy — we shall all be so much indebted to you."

"Do not speak of it, my dear madam," said Stevens, bowing with profound deference as the old lady took her departure. She went off with light heart, having great faith in the powers of the holy man, and an equal faith in his sincerity.

"What a bore!" he muttered as he closed the door be-

hind her. "This is one of the penalties, I suppose, which I must pay for my privileges. I shall be called upon to reform the morals and manners, and look into the petty cares of every chuckle-headed boor and boor's brat for ten miles round. See why boys reject their mush, and why the girls dislike to listen to the exhortations of a mamma, who requires them to leave undone what she has done herself — and with sufficient reason too, if her own experience be not wholly profitless. Well, I must submit. There are advantages, however; I shall have other pupils to tutor, and it shall go hard with me if all the grapes prove sour where the vines are so various."

The student of divinity, after these conclusions, prepared to make his toilet. Very few of these students, in their extreme solicitude for the well being of the inner man, show themselves wholly regardless of their externals. Even mourning, it appears, requires to be disposed by a fashionable costumer. Though the garments to which the necessities of travel limited Brother Stevens were not various, they were yet select. The good young man had an affection for his person, which was such certainly as to deserve his care. On this occasion he was more than usually particular. He did not scruple to discard the white cravat. For this he substituted a handkerchief which had the prettiest sprig of lilac, on a ground of the most delicate lemon color. He consulted complexions, and his mirror determined him in favor of this pattern. Brother Stevens would not have worn it had he been summoned, in his new vocation, to preach or pray at the conventicle; nor would he have dreamed of anything but a black stock had his business been to address the democracy from the top of a cider-barrel. His habits, under such necessities, would have been made to correspond with the principles (Qu?) which such a situation more distinctly called for.

But the thoughts of our worthy brother ran upon other objects. He was thinking of Margaret Cooper. He was

about to pay that damsel a visit. His progress, we may suppose, had not been inconsiderable when we are told that his present visit was one of previous arrangement. They were about to go forth on a ramble together — the woods were so wild and lovely — the rocks surrounding Charlemont were so very picturesque; — there was the quietest tarn, a sort of basin in the bosom of the hills at a little distance, which she was to show him; and there was the sweetest stream in the world, that meandered in the neighborhood; and Brother Stevens so loved the picturesque — lakes embosomed in hills, and streams stealing through unbroken forests, and all so much the more devotedly, when he had such a companion as Margaret Cooper.

And Margaret Cooper! — she the wild, the impassioned. A dreamer — a muse — filled with ambitious thoughts — proud, vain, aspiring after the vague, the unfathomable! What was her joy, now that she could speak her whole soul, with all its passionate fullness, to understanding ears! Stevens and herself had already spoken together. Her books had been his books. The glowing passages which she loved to repeat, were also the favorite passages in his memory. Over the burning and thrilling strains of Byron, the tender and spiritual of Shelley, the graceful and soft of Campbell, she loved to linger. They filled her thoughts. They made her thoughts. She felt that her true utterance lay in their language; and this language, until now, had fallen dead and without fruit upon the dull ears of her companions in Charlemont. What was their fiddling and festivity to her! What their tedious recreations by hillside or stream, when she had to depress her speech to the base levels of their unimagined souls! The loveliness of nature itself, unrepresented by the glowing hues of poetry, grew tame, if not offensive; and when challenged to its contemplation by those to whom the muse was nothing, the fancy of the true observer grew chilled and heavy, and the scenes of beauty seemed prostituted in their glance.

We have all felt this. Nothing can more annoy the soul of taste or sensibility than to behold its favorite scene and subject fail in awakening others to that emotion which it has inspired in ourselves. We turn away in haste, lest the object of our worship should become degraded by a longer survey. Enthusiasm recoils at a denial of sympathy; and all the worth of our companion, in a thousand other respects, fails to reconcile us to his coldness and indifference.

That Alfred Stevens had taste and talent—that he was well read in the volumes which had been her favorite study, Margaret Cooper needed no long time to discover. She soon ascribed to him qualities and tastes which were beyond his nature. Deceived by his tact, she believed in his enthusiasm. He soon discovered *her* tastes; and she found equally soon that *his* were like her own. After this discovery, she gave him credit for other and more important possessions; and little dreamed that, while he responded to her glowing sentiments with others equally glowing—avowed the same love for the same authors, and concurred with her in the preference of the same passages—his feelings were as little susceptible of sympathy with hers as would have been those of the cold demon Mephistopheles! While her eye was flashing, her cheek flushed, her breast heaving with the burning thoughts and strains of the master to whom her beautiful lips were giving utterance, he was simply sensible to *her* beauty—to its strange, wild charms—and meditating thoughts from which the soul of true poetry recoils with the last feelings of aversion. Even the passion which he felt while he surveyed her, foreign as it was to those legitimate emotions which her ambition and her genius would equally have tended to inspire in any justly-minded nature, might well be considered frigid—regarded as the result of deliberate artifice—the true offspring of an habitual and base indulgence.

It was to meet this unsophisticated, impassioned, and confiding girl, that Alfred Stevens bestowed such particu-

lar pains on his costume. He felt its deficiencies, and, accordingly, the necessity of making the most of it; for, though he perfectly well knew that such a woman as Margaret Cooper would have been the very last to regard the mere garment in which a congenial nature is arrayed, yet he also well knew that the costume is not less indicative of the tastes than the wealth of the wearer. You will see thousands of persons, men and women, richly dressed, and but one will be *well* dressed: that one, most generally, will be the individual who is perhaps of all others possessed of the least resources for dress, other than those which dwell in the well-arranged mind, the well-disposing taste, and the happy, crowning fancy.

His tasks of the toilet were at length ended, and he was preparing to go forth. He was about to leave the chamber, had already placed his hand upon the latch of the door, when he heard the voice of his hostess, on the stairway, in seeming expostulation with her son. He was about to forbear his purpose of departure until the parties had retired, when, remembering the solicitude of the lady, and thinking it would show that zeal in her service which he really could not entertain, he determined at once to join the young man, and begin with him that certain degree of intimacy without which it could scarcely be supposed that he could broach the subject of his personal affairs. He felt somewhat the awkwardness of this assumed duty, but then he recollected his vocation; he knew the paramount influence of the clergy upon all classes of persons in the West, and, with the conscious superiority derived from greater years and better education, he felt himself fortified in undertaking the paternal office which the fond, foolish mother had confided to his hands. Accordingly, descending the stairs briskly, he joined the two at the entrance of the dwelling. The son was already on the outside; the mother stood in the doorway; and, as Stevens appeared and drew nigh, William Hinkley bowed, and turned away as if to withdraw.

"If you have no objections, Mr. Hinkley," said Stevens, "I will join you. You seem to be about to go my way."

The young man paused with an air of reluctance, muttered something which was not altogether intelligible, but which Stevens construed into assent, and the two set forth together—the good old matron giving a glance of gratitude to the benevolent young student which her son did not fail to note, while, at the same time, a sentence which evidently conveyed some motherly rebuke, was addressed to his already-irritated ears.

CHAPTER XI.

WRESTLING.

ALFRED STEVENS, as he walked behind his young companion, observed him with a more deliberate survey than he had yet taken. Hitherto, the young man had challenged but little of his scrutiny. He had simply noted him for a tall youth, yet in the green, who appeared of a sulky, retiring nature, and whose looks had seemed to him on one or more occasions to manifest something like distaste for himself. The complacency of Stevens, however, was too well grounded to be much disturbed by such an exhibition. Perhaps, indeed, he would have derived a malicious sort of satisfaction in making a presumptuous lad feel his inferiority. He had just that smallness of spirit which would find its triumph in the success of such a performance.

He now observed that the youth was well formed, tall, not ungraceful—with features of singular intelligence, though subdued to the verge of sadness. His face was pale and thin, his eyes were a little sunken, and his air, expression, and general outside, denoted a youth of keen sensibilities, who had suffered some disappointment.

In making this examination, Alfred Stevens was not awakened to any generous purposes. He designed, in reality, nothing more than to acquit himself of the duty he had undertaken with the smallest possible exertion. His own mind was one of that mediocre character which the

heart never informs. His scrutiny, therefore, though it enabled him to perceive that the young man had qualities of worth, was not such as to prompt any real curiosity to examine further. A really superior mind would have been moved to look into these resources; and, without other motive than that of bringing a young, laboring, and ardent soul out of the meshes of a new and bewildering thought or situation, would have addressed himself to the task with that degree of solicitous earnestness which disarms prejudice and invites and wins confidence. But, with his first impression, that the whole business was a "bore," our benevolent young teacher determined on getting through with it with the least possible effort. He saw that the youth carried a book under his arm, the externals of which, so uniform and discouraging as they appear in every legal library, could not well be questioned as belonging to some such venerable receptacle of barbarous phrase and rigid authority. The circumstance afforded him an occasion to begin a conversation, the opening of which, with all his coolness, was a subject of some awkwardness.

"You seem a student like myself, Mr. Hinkley, and, if I mistake not from the appearance of your book, you are taking up the profession which I am about to lay down."

"This is a law-book, sir," said Hinkley, in accents which were rather meek than cold; "it is Blackstone."

"Ah! I thought as much. Have you been long a student?"

"I may scarcely consider myself one yet. I have read, sir, rather than studied."

"A good distinction, not often made. But, do you incline to law seriously?"

"Yes, sir—I know no occupation to which I so much incline."

"The law is a very arduous profession. It requires a rare union of industry, talent, and knowledge of mankind to be a good lawyer."

“I should think so, sir.”

“Few succeed where thousands fail. Young men are very apt to mistake inclination for ability; and to be a poor lawyer—”

“Is to be worse than poor—is to be despicable!” replied Hinkley with a half-smile, as he interrupted a speech which might have been construed into a very contemptuous commentary on his own pretensions. It would seem that the young man had so understood it. He continued thus:—

“It may be so with me, sir. It is not improbable that I deceive myself, and confound inclination with ability.”

“Oh, pardon me, my dear young friend,” said Stevens patronizingly; “but I do not say so. I utter a mere generality. Of course, I can know nothing on the subject of your abilities. I should be glad to know. I should like to converse with you. But the law is very arduous, very exacting. It requires a good mind, and it requires the whole of it. There is no such thing as being a good lawyer from merely reading law. You can’t bolt it as we do food in this country. We must chew upon it. It must be well digested. You seem to have the right notion on this subject. I should judge so from two things: the distinction which you made between the reader and the student; and the fact that your appearance is that of the student. I am afraid, my young friend, that you overwork yourself. You look thin, and pale, and unhappy. You should be careful that your passion for study is not indulged in at the peril of your health.”

The frame of the young man seemed to be suddenly agitated. His face was flushed, and a keen, quick, flash of anger seemed to lighten in his eyes as he looked up to the paternal counsellor and replied:—

“I thank you, sir, for your interest, but it is premature. I am not conscious that my health suffers from this or any other cause.”

"Nay, my young friend, do not deceive yourself. You perhaps underrate your own industry. It is very difficult matter to decide how much we can do and how much we ought to do, in the way of study. No mere thinking can determine this matter for us. It can only be decided by being able to see what others do and can endure. In a little country village like this, one can not easily determine; and the difficulty may be increased somewhat by one's own conviction, of the immense deal that one has to learn. If you were to spend a year in some tolerably large community. Perhaps you meditate some such plan?"

"I do not, sir," was the cold reply.

"Indeed; and have you no desire that way?"

"None!"

"Very strange! at your time of life the natural desire is to go into the great world. Even the student fancies he can learn better there than he can anywhere else—and so he can."

"Indeed, sir: if I may be so bold to ask, why, with this opinion, have you left the great city to bury yourself in a miserable village like Charlemont?"

The question was so quickly put, and with so much apparent keenness, that Stevens found the tables suddenly reversed. But he was in nowise discomposed. He answered promptly.

"You forget," he said, "that I was speaking of very young men, of an ambitious temper, who were seeking to become lawyers. The student of divinity may very well be supposed to be one who would withdraw himself from the scene of ambition, strifes, vanities, and tumultuous passions."

"You speak, sir, as if there were a material difference in our years?" said Hinkley inquiringly.

"Perhaps it is less than in our experience, my young friend," was the answer of the other, betraying that quiet sense of superiority which would have been felt more gall-

ingly by Hinkley had he been of a less modest nature. Still, it had the effect of arousing some of the animal in his blood, and he responded in a sentence which was not entirely without its sneer, though it probably passed without penetrating such a buff of self-esteem as guarded the sensibilities of our adventurer.

“ You are fortunate sir, if, at your time of life, you have succeeded in withdrawing your thoughts and feelings, with your person, from such scenes of ambition as you speak of. But I fancy the passions dwell with us in the country as well as with the wiser people in the town ; and I am not sure that there is any pursuit much more free from their intrusion than that of the law.”

“ Your remark exhibits penetration, Mr. Hinkley. I should not be surprised if you have chosen your profession properly. Still, I should counsel you not to overwork yourself. Bear with me, sir ; I feel an interest in your behalf, and I must think you do so. Allow me to be something of a judge in this matter. You are aware, sir, that I too have been a lawyer.”

The youth bowed stiffly.

“ If I can lend you any assistance in your studies, I will do so. Let me arrange them for you, and portion out your time. I know something about that, and will save you from injuring your health. On this point you evidently need instruction. You are doing yourself hurt. Your appearance is matter of distress and apprehension to your parents.”

“ To my parents, sir ?”

“ Your mother, I mean ! She spoke to me about you this very morning. She is distressed at some unaccountable changes which have taken place in your manners, your health, your personal appearance. Of course I can say nothing on the subject of the past, or of these changes ; but I may be permitted to say that your present looks do not betoken health, and I have supposed this to be on account of your studies. I promised your good mother to con-

fer with you, and counsel you, and if I can be of any help——

“You are very good, sir!”

The young man spoke bitterly. His gorge was rising. It was not easy to suppress his vexation with his mother, and the indignation which he felt at the supercilious approaches of the agent whom she had employed. Besides, his mind, not less than his feelings, was rising in vigor in due degree with the pressure put upon it.

“You are very good, sir, and I am very much obliged to you. I could have wished, however, that my mother had not given you this trouble, sir. She certainly must have been thinking of Mr. John Cross. She could scarcely have hoped that any good could have resulted to me, from the counsel of one who is so little older than myself.”

This speech made our adventurer elevate his eyebrows. He absolutely stopped short to look upon the speaker. William Hinkley stopped short also. His eye encountered that of Stevens with an expression as full of defiance as firmness. His cheeks glowed with the generous indignation which filled his veins.

“This fellow has something in him after all,” was the involuntary reflection that rose to the other’s mind. The effect was, however, not very beneficial to his own manner. Instead of having the effect of impressing upon Stevens the necessity of working cautiously, the show of defiance which he saw tended to provoke and annoy him. The youth had displayed so much propriety in his anger, had been so moderate as well as firm, and had uttered his answer with so much dignity and correctness, that he felt himself rebuked. To be encountered by an unsophisticated boy, and foiled, though but for an instant—slightly estimated, though but by a youth, and him too, a mere rustic—was mortifying to the self-esteem that rather precipitately hurried to resent it.”

“You take it seriously, Mr. Hinkley. But surely an

offer of service need not be mistaken. As for the trifling difference which may be in our years, that is perhaps nothing to the difference which may be in our experience, our knowledge of the world, our opportunities and studies."

"Surely, sir; all these *may* be, but at all events we are not bound to assume their existence until it is shown."

"Oh, you are likely to prove an adept in the law, Mr. Hinkley."

"I trust, sir, that your progress may be as great in the church."

"Ha!—do I understand you? There is war between us then?" said Stevens, watching the animated and speaking countenance of William Hinkley with increasing curiosity.

"Ay, sir—there is!" was the spirited reply of the youth. "Let it be war; I am the better pleased, sir, that you are the first to proclaim it."

"Very good," said Stevens, "be it so, if you will. At all events you can have no objection to say why it should be so."

"Do you ask, sir?"

"Surely; for I can not guess."

"You are less sagacious, then, than I had fancied you. You, scarce older than myself—a stranger among us—come to me in the language of a father, or a master, and without asking what I have of feeling, or what I lack of sense, undertake deliberately to wound the one, while insolently presuming to inform the other."

"At the request of your own mother!"

"Pshaw! what man of sense or honesty would urge such a plea. Years, and long intimacy, and wisdom admitted to be superior, could alone justify the presumption."

The cheeks of Stevens became scalding hot.

"Young man!" he exclaimed, "there is something more than this!"

"What! would it need more were our positions reversed?"

demanded Hinkley with a promptness that surprised him self.

“Perhaps not! would you provoke me to personal violence?”

“Ha! might I hope for that? surely you forget that you are a churchman?”

Stevens paused awhile before he answered. His eyes looked vacantly around him. By this time they had left the more thickly-settled parts of the village considerably behind them. But a few more dwellings lay along the path on which they were approaching. On the left, a gorge opened in the hills by which the valley was dotted, which seemed a pathway, and did indeed lead to one or more dwellings which were out of sight in the opposite valley. The region to which this pathway led was very secluded, and the eye of Stevens surveyed it for a few moments in silence. The words of Hinkley unquestionably conveyed a challenge. According to the practice of the country, *as a lawyer*, he would have been bound to have taken it as such. A moment was required for reflection. His former and present position caused a conflict in his mind. The last sentence of Hinkley, and a sudden glimpse which he just then caught of the residence of Margaret Cooper, determined his answer.

“I thank you, young man, for reminding me of my duties. You had nearly provoked the old passions and old practices into revival. I forgive you—you misunderstand me clearly. I know not how I have offended you, for my only purpose was to serve your mother and yourself. I may have done this unwisely. I will not attempt to prove that I have not. At all events, assured of my own motives, I leave you to yourself. You will probably ere long feel the injustice you have done me!”

He continued on his way, leaving William Hinkley almost rooted to the spot. The poor youth was actually stunned, not by what was said to him, but by the sudden

consciousness of his own vehemence. He had expressed himself with a boldness and an energy of which neither himself nor his friend, until now, would have thought him capable. A moment's pause in the provocation, and the feelings which had goaded him on were taken with a revulsion quite as sudden. As he knew not well what he had said, so he fancied he had said everything precisely as the passionate thought had suggested it in his own mind. Already he began to blame himself—to feel that he had done wrong—that there had been nothing in the conduct or manner of Stevens, however unpleasant, to justify his own violence; and that the true secret of his anger was to be found in that instinctive hostility which he had felt for his rival from the first. The more he mused, the more he became humbled by his thoughts; and when he recollected the avowed profession of Stevens his shame increased. He felt how shocking it was to intimate to a sworn non-combatant the idea of a personal conflict. To what point of self-abasement his thoughts would have carried him, may only be conjectured; he might have hurried forward to overtake his antagonist with the distinct purpose of making the most ample apology; nay, more, such was the distinct thought which was now pressing upon his mind, when he was saved from this humiliation by perceiving that Stevens had already reached, and was about to enter the dwelling of Margaret Cooper. With this sight, every thought and feeling gave place to that of baffled love, and disappointed affection. With a bitter groan he turned up the gorge, and soon shut himself from sight of the now hateful habitation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MASTER AND HIS PUPILS.

THE course of the young rustic was pursued for half a mile further till he came to a little cottage of which the eye could take no cognizance from any part of the village. It was embowelled in a glen of its own—a mere cup of the slightly-rising hills, and so encircled by foliage that it needed a very near approach of the stranger before he became aware of its existence. The structure was very small, a sort of square box with a cap upon it, and consisted of two rooms only on a ground floor, with a little lean-to or shed-room in the rear, intended for a kitchen. As you drew nigh and passed through the thick fringe of wood by which its approach was guarded, the space opened before you, and you found yourself in a sort of amphitheatre, of which the cottage was the centre. A few trees dotted this area, large and massive trees, and seemingly preserved for purposes of shade only. It was the quietest spot in the world, and inspired just that sort of feeling in the contemplative stranger which would be awakened by a ramble among the roofless ruins of the ancient abbey. It was a home for contemplation—in which one might easily forget the busy world without, and deliver himself up, without an effort, to the sweetly sad musings of the anchorite.

The place was occupied, however. A human heart beat within the humble shed, and there was a spirit, sheltered

by its quiet, that mused many high thoughts, and dreamed in equal congratulation and self-reproach, of that busy world from which it was an exile. The visit of William Hinkley was not paid to the solitude. A venerable man, of large frame, and benignant aspect, sat beneath an aged tree, paternal in its appearance like himself. This person might be between fifty and sixty years of age. His hair, though very thick and vigorous, was as white as driven snow. But there were few wrinkles on his face, and his complexion was the clear red and white of a healthy and sanguine temperament. His brow was large and lofty. It had many more wrinkles than his face. There were two large horizontal seams upon it that denoted the exercise of a very busy thought. But the expression of his eye was that of the most unembarrassed benevolence and peace. It was subdued and sometimes sad, but then it had the sweetest, playfullest twinkle in the world. His mouth, which was small and beautifully formed, wore a similar expression. In short he was what we would call a handsome old gentleman, whose appearance did not offend taste, and whose kind looks invited confidence. Nor would we mistake his character.

This person was the Mr. Calvert, the schoolmaster of the village, of whom Mrs. Hinkley spoke to Alfred Stevens in discussing the condition of her son. His tasks were over for the day. The light-hearted rabble whom he taught, released from his dominion which was not severe, were, by this time, scampering over the hills, as far from their usual place of restraint as the moderate strength of their legs could carry them. Though let loose, boys are not apt to feel their liberty in its prime and freshness, immediately in the good of the schoolhouse. The old gentleman himself, sat out in the open air, beneath a massive paternal stretching of whose venerable arms not unfrequently led to the employment of the shade below for carrying on the operations of the schoolhouse. There,

squat on their haunches, the sturdy boys—germs of the finest peasantry in the world—surrounded their teacher in a group quite as pleasing as picturesque. The sway of the old man was paternal. His rod was rather a figurative than a real existence; and when driven to the use of the birch, the good man, consulting more tastes than one, employed the switch from the peach or some other odorous tree or shrub, in order to reconcile the lad, as well as he could, to the extraordinary application. He was one of those considerate persons, who disguise pills in gold-leaf, and if compelled, as a judge, to hang a gentleman, would decree that a rope of silk should carry out the painful requisitions of the laws.

Seated beneath his tree, in nearly the same spot and position in which he had dismissed his pupils, William Calvert pored over the pages of a volume as huge of size as it was musty of appearance. It was that pleasant book—quite as much romance as history—the “Knights of Malta,” by our venerable father, Monsieur L’Abbe Vertot. Its dull, dim, yellow-looking pages—how yellow, dim, and dull-looking in comparison with more youthful works—had yet a life and soul which it is not easy to find in many of these latter. Its high wrought and elaborate pictures of strife, and toil, and bloodshed, grew vividly before the old man’s eyes; and then, to help the illusion, were there not the portraits—mark me—the veritable portraits, engraved on copper, with all their titles, badges, and insignia, done to the life, of all those brave, grand, and famous masters of the order, by whom the deeds were enacted which he read, and who stared out upon his eyes, at every epoch, in full confirmation of the veracious narrative? No wonder that the old man became heedless of external objects. No wonder he forgot the noise of the retiring urchins, and the toils of the day, as, for the twentieth time, he glowed in the brave recital of the famous siege—the baffled fury of the Turk—the unshaken constancy



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and unremitted valor of the few but fearless defenders. The blood in his cheek might be seen hastening to and fro in accordance with the events of which he read. His eye was glowing—his pulse beating, and he half started from his seat, as, hearing a slight footstep, he turned to encounter the respectful homage of his former pupil, still his friend, our young acquaintance, William Hinkley.

The old man laid down his book upon the grass, extended his hand to his visiter, and leaning back against the tree, surrendered himself to a quiet chuckle in which there was the hesitancy of a little shame.

“You surprised me, William,” he said; “when I read old Vertot, and such books, I feel myself a boy again. You must have seen my emotion. I really had got so warm, that I was about to start up and look for the weapons of war; and had you but come a moment later, you might have suffered an assault. As it was, I took you for a Turk—Solyman himself—and was beginning to ask myself whether I should attack you tooth and nail, having no other weapons, or propose terms of peace. Considering the severe losses which you—I mean his Turkish highness—had sustained, I fancied that you would not be disinclined to an arrangement just at this moment. But this very notion, at the same time, led me to the conclusion that I might end the struggle for ever by another blow. A moment later, my boy, and you might have been compelled to endure it for the Turk.”

The youth smiled sadly as he replied: “I must borrow that book from you, sir, some of these days. I have often thought to do so, but I am afraid.”

“Afraid of what, William?”

“That it will turn my head, sir, and make me dislike more difficult studies.”

“It is a reasonable fear, my son; but there is no danger of this sort, if we will only take heed of one rule, and that is, to take such books as we take sweetmeats—in very

small quantities at a time, and never to interfere with the main repast. I suspect that light reading—or reading which we usually call light, but which, as it concerns the fate of man in his most serious relations, his hopes, his affections, his heart, nay, his very people and nation—is scarcely less important than any other. I suspect that this sort of reading would be of great service to the student, by relieving the solemnity of more tedious and exacting studies, if taken sparingly and at allotted hours. The student usually finds a recreation of some kind. I would make books of this description his recreation. Many a thick-headed and sour parent has forced his son into a beer-shop, into the tastes for tobacco and consequently brandy, simply from denying him amusements which equally warm the blood and elevate the imagination. Studies which merely inform the head are very apt to endanger the heart. This is the reproach usually urged against the class of persons whom we call thorough lawyers. Their intense devotion to that narrow sphere of law which leaves out jury-pleading, is very apt to endanger the existence of feeling and imagination. The mere analysis of external principles begets a degree of moral indifference to all things else, which really impairs the intellect by depriving it of its highest sources of stimulus. Mathematicians suffer in the same way—become mere machines, and forfeit, in their concern for figures, all the social and most of the human characteristics. The mind is always enfeebled by any pursuit so single and absorbing in its aims as to leave out of exercise any of the moral faculties. That course of study is the only one to make a truly great man, which compels the mind to do all things of which it is capable.”

“But how do you reconcile this, sir, with the opinion, so generally entertained, that no one man can serve two masters? Law, like the muse, is a jealous mistress. She is said to suffer no *lachesse* to escape with impunity.”

“You mistake me. While I counsel one to go out of his profession for relief and recreation, I still counsel but the one pursuit. Men fail in their professions, not because they daily assign an hour to amusement, but because they halt in a perpetual struggle between some two leading objects. For example, nothing is more frequent in our country than to combine law and politics. Nothing is more apt to ruin the lawyer.”

“Very true, sir. I now understand you. But I should think the great difficulty would be, in resorting to such pleasant books as this of Vertot for relief and recreation, that you could not cast him off when you please. The intoxication would continue even after the draught has been swallowed, and would thus interfere with the hours devoted to other employments.”

“There is reason in that, William, and that, indeed, is the grand difficulty. But to show that a good scheme has its difficulties is not an argument for abandoning it.”

“By no means, sir.”

“The same individual whom Vertot might intoxicate, would most probably be intoxicated by more dangerous stimulants. Everything, however, depends upon the habits of self-control which a man has acquired in his boyhood. The habit of self-control is the only habit which makes mental power truly effective. The man who can not compel himself to do or to forbear, can never be much of a student. Students, if you observe, are generally dogged men—inflexible, plodding, persevering—among lawyers, those men whom you always find at their offices, and seldom see anywhere else. They own that mental habit which we call self-control, which supplies the deficiency in numerous instances of real talent. It is a power, and a mighty power, particularly in this country, where children are seldom taught it, and consequently grow up to be a sort of moral vanes that move with every change of wind, and never fix until they do so with their own rust. He who learns this

power in boyhood will be very sure to master all his companions."

The darker expression of sadness passed over the countenance of the ingenuous youth.

"I am afraid," said he, "that I shall never acquire this habit."

"Why so? In your very fear I see a hope."

"Alas! sir, I feel my own instability of character. I feel myself the victim of a thousand plans and purposes, which change as soon and as often as they are made. I am afraid, sir, I shall be nothing!"

"Do not despond, my son," said the old man sympathizingly. "Your fear is natural to your age and temperament. Most young men at your time of life feel numerous yearnings—the struggle of various qualities of mind, each striving in newly-born activity, and striving adversely. Your unhappiness arises from the refusal of these qualities to act together. When they learn to co-operate, all will be easy. Your strifes will be subdued; there will be a calm like that upon the sea when the storms subside."

"Ah! but when will that be? A long time yet. It seems to me that the storm rather increases than subsides."

"It may seem so to you now, and yet, when the strife is greatest, the favorable change is at hand. It needs but one thing to make all the conflicting qualities of one's mind co-operate."

"What is that one thing, sir?"

"An object! As yet, you have none."

"None, sir!"

"None—or rather many—which is pretty much the same thing as having none."

"I am not sure, sir—but it seems to me, sir, that I have an object."

"Indeed, William! are you sure?"

"I think so, sir."

"Well, name it."

"I have ambition, sir."

"Ah! that is a passion, not an object. Does your ambition point in one direction? Unless it does, it is objectless."

The youth was silent. The old man proceeded:—

"I am disposed to be severe with you, my son. (There is no surer sign of feebleness than in the constant beginnings and the never performings of a mind. (Know thyself, is the first lesson to learn.) Is it not very childish to talk of having ambition, without knowing what to do with it? If we have ambition, it is given to us to work with. You come to me, and declare this ambition! We confer together. Your ambition seeks for utterance. You ask, 'What sort of utterance will suit an ambition such as mine?' To answer this question, we ask, 'What are your qualities?' Did you think, William, that I disparaged yours when I recommended the law to you as a profession?"

"No, sir! oh, no! Perhaps you overrated them. I am afraid so—I think so."

"No, William, unfortunately, you do not think about it. If you would suffer yourself to think, you would speak a different language."

"I can not think—I am too miserable to think!" exclaimed the youth in a burst of passion. The old man looked surprised. He gazed with a serious anxiety into the youth's face, and then addressed him:—

"Where have you been, William, for the last three weeks? In all that time I have not seen you."

A warm blush suffused the cheeks of the pupil. He did not immediately answer.

"Ask *me*!" exclaimed a voice from behind them, which they both instantly recognised as that of Ned Hinkley, the cousin of William. He had approached them, in the earnestness of their interview, without having disturbed them. The bold youth was habited in a rough woodman's dress. He wore a round jacket of homespun, and in his hand he

carried a couple of fishing-rods, which, with certain other implements, betrayed sufficiently the object of his present pursuit.

"Ask me!" said he. "I can tell you what he's been about better than anybody else."

"Well, Ned," said the old man, "what has it been? I am afraid it is your fiddle that keeps him from his Blackstone."

"My fiddle, indeed! If he would listen to my fiddle when she speaks out, he'd be wiser and better for it. Look at him, Mr. Calvert, and say whether it's book or fiddle that's likely to make him as lean as a March pickerel in the short space of three months. Only look at him, I say."

"Truly, William, I had not observed it before, but, as Ned says, you do look thin, and you tell me you are unhappy. Hard study might make you thin, but can not make you unhappy. What is it?"

The more volatile and freespoken cousin answered for him.

"He's been shot, gran'pa, since you saw him last."

"Shot?"

"Yes, shot!—*He thinks* mortally. I think not. A flesh wound to my thinking, that a few months more will cure."

"You have some joke at bottom, Edward," said the old man gravely.

"Joke, sir! It's a tough joke that cudgels a plump lad into a lean one in a single season."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to use your own language, gran'pa. Among the lessons I got from you when you undertook to fill our heads with wisdom by applications of smartness to a very different place—among the books we sometimes read from was one of Master Ovid."

"Ha! ha! I see what you're after. I understand the shooting. So you think that the blind boy has hit William, eh?"

"A flesh wound as I tell you; but he thinks the bolt is

in his heart. I'm sure it can and will be plucked out, and no death will follow."

"Well! who's the maiden from whose eyes the arrow was barbed?"

"Margaret Cooper."

"Ah! indeed!" said the old man gravely.

"Do not heed him," exclaimed William Hinkley; but the blush upon his cheeks, still increasing, spoke a different language.

"I would rather not heed him, William. The passions of persons so young as yourself are seldom of a permanent character. The attractions which win the boy seldom compensate the man. There is time enough for this, ten years hence, and love then will be far more rational."

"Ah, lud!—wait ten years at twenty. I can believe a great deal in the doctrine of young men's folly, but I can't go that. I'm in love myself."

"You!"

"Yes! I!—I'm hit too—and if you don't like it, why did you teach us Ovid and the rest? As for rational love, that's a new sort of thing that we never heard about before. Love was never expected to be rational. He's known the contrary. I've heard so ever since I was knee-high to the great picture of your Cupid that you showed us in your famous Dutch edition of Apuleius. The young unmarried men feel that it's irrational; the old married people tell us so in a grunt that proves the truth of what they say. But that don't alter the case. It's a sort of natural madness that makes one attack in every person's lifetime. I don't believe in repeated attacks. Some are bit worse than others; and some think themselves bit, and are mistaken. That's the case with William, and it's that that keeps him from your law-books and my fiddle. That makes him thin. He has a notion of Margaret Cooper, and she has none of him; and love that's all of one side is neither real nor rational. I don't believe it."

William Hinkley muttered something angrily in the ears of the speaker.

"Well, well!" said the impetuous cousin, "I don't want to make you vexed, and still less do I come here to talk such politics with you. What do you say to tickling a trout this afternoon? That's what I come for."

"It's too cool," said the old man.

"Not a bit. There's a wind from the south, and a cast of cloud is constantly growing between us and the sun. I think we shall do something—something better than talking about love, and law, where nobody's agreed. You, gran'pa, won't take the love; Bill Hinkley can't stomach the law, and the trout alone can bring about a reconciliation. Come, gran'pa, I'm resolved on getting your supper to-night, and you must go and see me do it."

"On one condition only, Ned."

"What's that, gran'pa?"

"That you both sup with me."

"Done for myself. What say you, Bill?"

The youth gave a sad assent, and the rattling youth proceeded:—

"The best cure of grief is eating. Love is a sort of pleasant grief. Many a case of affliction have I seen mended by a beefsteak. Fish is better. Get a lover to eat, rouse up his appetites, and, to the same extent, you lessen his affections. Hot suppers keep down the sensibilities; and, gran'pa, after ours, to-night, you shall have the fiddle. If I don't make her speak to you to-night, my name's Brag, and you need never again believe me."

And the good-humored youth, gathering up his canes, led the way to the hills, slowly followed by his two less elastic companions.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HISTORY OF A FAILURE.

THE route, which conducted them over a range of gently-ascending hills, through groves tolerably thick, an uncleared woodland tract comprising every variety of pleasant foliage, at length brought them to a lonely tarn or lake, about a mile in circumference, nestled and crouching in the hollow of the hills, which, in some places sloped gently down to its margin, at others hung abruptly over its deep and pensive waters. A thick fringe of shrubs, water-grasses, and wild flowers, girdled its edges, and gave a dark and mysterious expression to its face. There were many beaten tracks, narrow paths for individual wayfarers on foot, which conducted down to favorite fishing-spots. These were found chiefly on those sides of the lake where the rocks were precipitous. Perched on a jutting eminence, and half shrouded in the bushes which clothed it, the silent fisherman took his place, while his fly was made to kiss the water in capricious evolutions, such as the experienced angler knows how to employ to beguile the wary victim from close cove, or gloomy hollow, or from beneath those decaying trunks of overthrown trees which have given his brood a shelter from immemorial time.

To one of these selected spots, Ned Hinkley proceeded, leaving his companions above, where, in shade themselves, and lying at ease upon the smooth turf, they could watch his successes, and at the same time enjoy the *coup d'œil*,

which was singularly beautiful, afforded by the whole surrounding expanse. The tarn, like the dark mysterious dwelling of an Undine, was spread out before them with the smoothness of glass, though untransparent, and shining beneath their eyes like a vast basin of the richest jet. A thousand pretty changes along the upland slopes, or abrupt hills which hemmed it in, gave it a singular aspect of variety which is seldom afforded by any scene very remarkable for its stillness and seclusion. Opposite to the rock on which Ned Hinkley was already crouching, the hill-slope to the lake was singularly unbroken, and so gradual was the ascent from the margin, that one was scarcely conscious of his upward movement, until looking behind him, he saw how far below lay the waters which he had lately left.

The pathway, which had been often trodden, was very distinctly marked to the eyes of our two friends on the opposite elevation, and they could also perceive where the same footpath extended on either hand a few yards from the lake, so as to enable the wanderer to prolong his rambles, on either side, until reaching the foot of the abrupt masses of rock which distinguished the opposite margin of the basin. To ascend these, on that side, was a work of toil, which none but the lover of the picturesque is often found willing to encounter. Above, even to the eyes of our friends, though they occupied an eminence, the skies seemed circumscribed to the circumference of the lake and the hills by which it was surrounded; and the appearance of the whole region, therefore, was that of a complete amphitheatre, the lake being the floor, the hills the mighty pillars, and the roof, the blue, bright, fretted canopy of heaven.

“I have missed you, my son, for some time past, and the beauty of the picture reminds me of what your seeming neglect has made me lose. When I was a young man I would have preferred to visit such a spot as this alone. But the sense of desolation presses heavily upon an old man under any circumstances; and he seeks for the company of the

young, as if to freshen, with sympathy and memory, the cheerlessness and decay which attends all his own thoughts and fancies. To come alone into the woods, even though the scene I look on be as fair as this, makes me moody and awakens gloomy imaginations ; and since you have been so long absent, I have taken to my books again, and given up the woods. Ah ! books, alone, never desert us ; never prove unfaithful ; never chide us ; never mock us, as even these woods do, with the memory of baffled hopes, and dreams of youth, gone, never to return again.

“ I trust, my dear sir, you do not think me ungrateful. I have not wilfully neglected you. More than once I set out to visit you ; but my heart was so full — I was so very unhappy — that I had not the spirit for it. I felt that I should not be any company for you, and feared that I would only affect you with some of my own dullness.”

“ Nay, that should be no fear with you, my dear boy, for you should know that the very sorrows of youth, as they awaken the sympathies of age, provide it with the means of excitement. It is the misfortune of age that its interest is slow to kindle. Whatever excites the pulse, if not violently, is beneficial to the heart of the old man. But these sorrows of yours, my son — do you not call them by too strong a name ? I suspect they are nothing more than the discontents, the vague yearnings of the young and ardent nature, such as prompt enterprise and lead to nobleness. If you had them not, you would think of little else than how to squat with your cousin there, seeking to entrap your dinner ; nay, not so much — you would think only of the modes of cooking and the delight of eating the fish, and shrink from the toil of taking it. Do not deceive yourself. This sorrow which distresses you is possibly a beneficial sorrow. It is the hope which is in you to be something — to *do* something — for this *doing* is after all, and before all, the great object of living. The hope of the heart is always a discontent — most generally a wholesome discontent —

sometimes a noble discontent leading to nobleness. It is to be satisfied rather than nursed. You must do what it requires."

"I know not what it requires."

"Your *doing* then must be confined at present to finding out what that is."

"Alas! sir, it seems to me as if I could no more *think* than I can *do*."

"Very likely; — that is the case at present; and there are several reasons for this feebleness. The energies which have not yet been tasked, do not know well how to begin. You have been a favored boy. Your wants have been well provided for. Your parents have loved you only too much."

"Too much! Why, even now, I am met with cold looks and reproachful words, on account of this stranger, of whom nobody knows anything."

"Even so: suppose that to be the case, my son; still it does not alter the truth of what I say. You can not imagine that your parents prefer this stranger to yourself, unless you imagine them to have undergone a very sudden change of character. They have always treated you tenderly — too tenderly."

"Too tenderly, sir?"

"Yes, William, too tenderly. Their tenderness has enfeebled you, and that is the reason you know not in what way to begin to dissipate your doubts, and apply your energies. If they reproach you, that is because they have some interest in you, and a right in you, which constitutes their interest. If they treat the stranger civilly, it is because he is a stranger."

"Ay, sir, but what if they give this stranger authority to question and to counsel me? Is not this a cruel indignity?"

"Softly, William, softly! There is something at the bottom of this which I do not see, and which perhaps you

do not see. If your parents employ a stranger to counsel you, it proves that something in your conduct leads them to think that you need counsel."

"That may be, sir; but why not give it themselves? why employ a person of whom nobody knows anything?"

"I infer from your tone, my son, rather than your words, that you have some dislike to this stranger.

"No, sir——" was the beginning of the young man's reply, but he stopped short with a guilty consciousness. A warm blush overspread his cheek, and he remained silent. The old man, without seeming to perceive the momentary interruption, or the confusion which followed it, proceeded in his commentary.

"There should be nothing, surely, to anger you in good counsel, spoken even by a stranger, my son; and even where the counsel be not good, if the motive be so, it requires our gratitude though it may not receive our adoption."

"I don't know, sir, but it seems to me very strange, and is very humiliating, that I should be required to submit to the instructions of one of whom we know nothing, and who is scarcely older than myself."

"It may be mortifying to your self-esteem, my son, but self-esteem, when too active, is compelled constantly to suffer this sort of mortification. It may be that one man shall not be older in actual years than another, yet be able to teach that other. Merely living, days and weeks and months, constitutes no right to wisdom; it is the crowding events and experience—the indefatigable industry—the living actively and well—that supply us with the materials for knowing and teaching. In comparison with millions of your own age, who have lived among men, and shared in their strifes and troubles, you would find yourself as feeble a child as ever yet needed the helping hand of counsel and guardianship; and this brings me back to what I said before. Your parents have treated you too tenderly.

They have done everything for you. You have done nothing for yourself. They provide for your wants, hearken to your complaints, nurture you in sickness, with a diseasing fondness, and so render you incapable. Hence it is, that, in the toils of manhood, you do not know how to begin. You lack courage and perseverance."

"Courage and perseverance!" was the surprised exclamation of the youth.

"Precisely, and lest I should offend you, my son, I must acknowledge to you beforehand, that this very deficiency was my own."

"Yours, sir? I can not think it. What! lack courage?"

"Exactly so!"

"Why, sir — did I not see you myself, when everybody else looked on with trembling and with terror, throw yourself in the way of Drummond's horses and save the poor boy from being dashed to pieces? There was surely no lack of courage there!"

"No! in that sense, my son, I labor under no deficiency. But this sort of courage is of the meanest kind. It is the courage of impulse, not of steadfastness. Hear me, William. You have more than once allowed the expression of a wonder to escape you, why a man, having such a passion for books and study, and with the appearance of mental resources, such as I am supposed to possess, should be content, retiring from the great city, to set up his habitation in this remote and obscure region. My chosen profession was the law; I was no unfaithful student. True, I had no parents to lament my wanderings and failures; but I did not wander. I studied closely, with a degree of diligence which seemed to surprise all my companions. I was ambitious — intensely ambitious. My head ran upon the strifes of the forum, its exciting contests of mind and soul — its troubles, its triumphs. This was my leading thought — it was my only passion. The boy-frenzies for women, which are prompted less by sentiment or judgment, than by fever-

ish blood, troubled me little. Law was my mistress — took up all my time — absorbed all my devotion. I believe that I was a good lawyer — no pettifogger — the merely drilled creature who toils for his license, and toils for ever after solely for his petty gains, in the miserably petty arts of making gains for others, and eluding the snares set for his own feet by kindred spirits. As far as the teaching of this country could afford me the means and opportunity, I endeavored to procure a knowledge of universal law — its sources — its true objects — its just principles — its legitimate dicta. Mere authorities never satisfied me, unless, passing behind the black gowns, I could follow up the reasoning to the first fountains — the small original truths, the nicely discriminated requisitions of immutable justice — the clearly-defined and inevitable wants of a superior and prosperous society. Everything that could illustrate law as well as fortify it; every collateral aid, in the shape of history or moral truth, I gathered together, even as the dragoon whose chief agent is his sabre, yet takes care to provide himself with pistols, that may finish what the other weapon has begun. Nor did I content myself with the mere acquisition of the necessary knowledge. Knowing how much depends upon voice, manner and fluency, in obtaining success before a jury, I addressed myself to these particulars with equal industry. My voice, even now, has a compass which your unexercised lungs, though quite as good originally as mine, would fail entirely to contend with. I do not deceive myself, as I certainly do not seek to deceive you, when I say, that I acquired the happiest mastery over my person."

"Ah! sir—we see that now—that must have been the case!" said the youth interrupting him. The other continued, sadly smiling as he heard the eulogy which the youth meant to speak, the utterance of which was obviously from the heart.

"My voice was taught by various exercises to be slow

or rapid, soft or strong, harsh or musical, by the most sudden, yet unnoticeable transitions. I practised all the arts, which are recommended by elocutionists for this purpose, I rumbled my eloquence standing on the seashore, up to my middle in the breakers. I ran, roaring up steep hills—I stretched myself at length by the side of meandering brooks, or in slumberous forests of pine, and sought, by the merest whispers, to express myself with distinctness and melody. But there was something yet more requisite than these, and this was language. My labors to obtain all the arts of utterance did not seem less successful. I could dilate with singular fluency, with classical propriety, and great natural vigor of expression. I studied directness of expression by a frequent intercourse with men of business, and examined, with the nicest urgency, the particular characteristics of those of my own profession who were most remarkable for their plain, forcible speaking. I say nothing of my studies of such great masters in discourse and philosophy, as Milton, Shakspere, Homer, Lord Bacon, and the great English divines. As a model of pure English the Bible was a daily study of two hours; and from this noble well of vernacular eloquence, I gathered—so I fancied—no small portion of its quaint expressive vigor, its stern emphasis, its golden and choice phrases of illustration. Never did a young lawyer go into the forum more thoroughly clad in proof, or with a better armory as well for defence as attack.”

“You did not fail, sir?” exclaimed the youth with a painful expression of eager anxiety upon his countenance.

“I did fail—fail altogether! In the first effort to speak, I fainted, and was carried lifeless from the court-room.”

The old man covered his face with his hands, for a few moments, to conceal the expression of pain and mortification which memory continued to renew in utter despite of time. The young man’s hand rested affectionately on his

shoulder. A few moments sufficed to enable the former to renew his narrative.

“I was stunned but not crushed by this event. I knew my own resources. I recollected a similar anecdote of Sheridan; of his first attempt and wretched failure. I, too, felt that ‘I had it in me,’ and though I did not express, I made the same resolution, that ‘I would bring it out.’ But Sheridan and myself failed from different causes, though I did not understand this at that time. He had a degree of hardihood which I had not; and he utterly lacked my sensibilities. The very intenseness of my ambition; the extent of my expectation; the elevated estimate which I had made of my own profession; of its exactions; and, again, of what was expected from me; were all so many obstacles to my success. I did not so esteem them, then; and after renewing my studies in private, my exercises of expression and manner, and going through a harder course of drilling, I repeated the attempt to suffer a repetition of the failure. I did not again faint, but I was speechless. I not only lost the power of utterance, but I lost the corresponding faculty of sight. My eyes were completely dazed and confounded. The objects of sight around me were as crowded and confused as the far, dim ranges of figures, tribes upon tribes, and legions upon legions, which struggle in obscurity and distance, in any one of the begrimed and blurred pictures of Martin’s Pandemonium. My second failure was a more enfeebling disaster than the first. The first procured me the sympathy of my audience, the last exposed me to its ridicule.”

Again the old man paused. By this time, the youth had got one of his arms about the neck of the speaker, and had taken one of his hands within his grasp.

“Yours is a generous nature, William,” said Mr. Calvert, “and I have not said to you, until to-day, how grateful your boyish sympathies have been to me from the first day when you became my pupil. It is my knowledge of

these sympathies, and a desire to reward them, that prompts me to tell a story which still brings its pains to memory, and which would be given to no other ears than your own. I see that you are eager for the rest—for the wretched sequel.”

“Oh, no! sir—do not tell me any more of it if it brings you pain. I confess I should like to know all, but—”

“You shall have it all, my son. My purpose would not be answered unless I finished the narrative. You will gather from it, very possibly, the moral which I could not. You will comprehend something better, the woful distinction between courage of the blood and courage of the brain; between the mere recklessness of brute impulse, and the steady valor of the soul—that valor, which, though it trembles, marches forward to the attack—recovers from its fainting, to retrieve its defeat; and glows with self-indignation because it has suffered the moment of victory to pass, without employing itself to secure the boon!—

“Shame, and a natural desire to retrieve myself, operated to make me renew my efforts. I need not go through the processes by which I endeavored to acquire the necessary degree of hardihood. In vain did I recall the fact that my competitors were notoriously persons far inferior to me in knowledge of the topics; far inferior in the capacity to analyze them; rude and coarse in expression; unfamiliar with the language—mere delvers and diggers in a science in which I secretly felt that I should be a master. In vain did I recall to mind the fact that I knew the community before which I was likely to speak; I knew its deficiencies; knew the inferiority of its idols, and could and should have no sort of fear of its criticism. But it was myself that I feared. I had mistaken the true censor. It was my own standards of judgment that distressed and made me tremble. It was what I expected of myself—what I thought should be expected of me—that made my

weak soul recoil in terror from the conviction that I must fail in its endeavor to reach the point which my ambitious soul strove to attain. The fear, in such cases, produced the very disaster, from the anticipated dread of which it had arisen. I again failed—failed egregiously—failed utterly and for ever! I never again attempted the fearful trial. I gave up the contest, yielded the field to my inferiors, better-nerved, though inferior, and, with all my learning, all my eloquence, my voice, my manner; my resources of study, thought, and utterance, fled from sight—fled here—to bury myself in the wilderness, and descend to the less ambitious, but less dangerous vocation of schooling—I trust, to better uses—the minds of others. I had done nothing with my own.”

“Oh, sir, do not say so. Though you may have failed in one department of human performance, you have succeeded in others. You have lost none of the knowledge which you then acquired. You possess all the gifts of eloquence, of manner, of voice, of education, of thought.”

“But of what use, my son? Remember, we do not toil for these possessions to lock them up—to content ourselves, as the miserable miser, with the consciousness that we possess a treasure known to ourselves only—useless to all others as to ourselves! Learning, like love, like money, derives its true value from its circulation.”

“And you circulate yours, my dear sir. What do we not owe you in Charlemont? What do I not owe you, over all?”

“Love, my son—love only. Pay me that. Do not desert me in my old age. Do not leave me utterly alone!”

“I will not, sir—I never thought to do so.”

“But,” said the old man, “to resume. Why did I fail is still the question. Because I had not been taught those lessons of steady endurance in my youth which would have strengthened me against failure, and enable me finally to triumph. There is a rich significance in what we hear

of the Spartan boy, who never betrayed his uneasiness or agony though the fox was tearing out his bowels. There is a sort of moral roughening which boys should be made to endure from the beginning, if the hope is ever entertained, to mature their minds to intellectual manhood. Our American Indians prescribe the same laws, and in their practice, very much resemble the ancient Spartans. To bear fatigue, and starvation, and injury—exposure, wet, privation, blows—but never to complain. Nothing betrays so decidedly the lack of moral courage as the voice of complaint. It is properly the language of woman. It must not be your language. Do you understand me, William?”

“In part, sir, but I do not see how I could have helped being what I am.”

“Perhaps not, because few have control of their own education. Your parents have been too tender of you. They have not lessoned you in that proper hardihood which leads to performance. That task is before yourself, and you have shrunk from the first lessons.”

“How, sir?”

“Instead of clinging to your Blackstone, you have allowed yourself to be seduced from its pages, by such attractions as usually delude boys. The eye and lip of a pretty woman—a bright eye and a rosy cheek, have diverted you from your duties.”

“But do our duties deny us the indulgence of proper sensibilities?”

“Certainly not—*proper* sensibilities, on the contrary, prescribe our duties.”

“But love, sir—is not love a proper sensibility?”

“In its place, it is. But you are a boy only. Do you suppose that it was ever intended that you should entertain this passion before you had learned the art of providing your own food? Not so; and the proof of this is to be found in the fact that the loves of boyhood are never of

a permanent character. No such passion can promote happiness if it is indulged before the character of the parties is formed. I now tell you that in five years from this time you will probably forget Miss Cooper."

"Never! never!"

"Well, well—I go farther in my prophecy. Allow me to suppose you successful in your suit, which I fancy can never be the case——"

"Why, sir, why?"

"Because she is not the girl for you; or rather, she does not think you the man for her!"

"But why do you think so, sir?"

"Because I know you both. There are circumstances of discrepancy between you which will prevent it, and even were you to be successful in your suit, which I am very sure will never be the case, you would be the most miserably-matched couple under the sun."

"Oh, sir, do not say so—do not. I can not think so, sir."

"You *will* not think so, I am certain. I am equally certain from what I know of you both, that you are secure from any such danger. It is not my object to pursue this reference, but let me ask you, William, looking at things in the most favorable light, has Margaret Cooper ever given you any encouragement?"

"I can not say that she has, sir, but——"

"Nay, has she not positively discouraged you? Does she not avoid you—treat you coldly when you meet—say little, and that little of a kind to denote—I will not say dislike—but pride, rather than love?"

The young man said nothing. The old one proceeded:—

"You are silent, and I am answered. I have long watched your intercourse with this damsel, and loving you as my own son, I have watched it with pain. She is not for you, William. She loves you not. I am sure of it. I can not mistake the signs. She seeks other qualities than

such as you possess. She seeks meretricious qualities, and yours are substantial. She seeks the pomps of mind, rather than its subdued performances. She sees not, and can not see, your worth; and whenever you propose to her, your suit will be rejected. You have not done so yet?"

"No, sir—but I had hoped——"

"I am no enemy, believe me, William, when I implore you to discard your hope in that quarter. It will do you no hurt. Your heart will suffer no detriment, but be as whole and vigorous a few years hence—perhaps months—as if it had never suffered any disappointment."

"I wish I could think so, sir."

"And you would not wish that you could think so, if you were not already persuaded that your first wish is hopeless."

"But I am not hopeless, sir."

"Your cause is. But, promise me that you will not press your suit at present."

The young man was silent.

"You hesitate."

"I dare not promise."

"Ah, you are a foolish boy. Do you not see the rock on which you are about to split. You have never learned how to submit. This lesson of submission was that which made the Spartan boy famous. Here, you persist in your purpose, though your own secret convictions, as well as your friend's counsel, tell you that you strive against hope. You could not patiently submit to the counsel of this stranger, though he came directly from your parents, armed with authority to examine and to counsel."

"Submit to him! I would sooner perish!" exclaimed the indignant youth.

"You will perish unless you learn this one lesson. But where now is your ambition, and what does it aim at?"

The youth was silent.

"The idea of an ambitious youth, at twenty, giving up

book and candle, leaving his studies, and abandoning himself to despair, because his sweetheart won't be his sweetheart any longer, gives us a very queer idea of the sort of ambition which works in his breast."

"Don't, sir, don't, I pray you, speak any more in this manner."

"Nay, but, William, ask yourself. Is it not a queer idea?"

"Spare me, sir, if you love me."

"I do love you, and to show you that I do, I now recommend to you to propose to Margaret Cooper."

"What, sir, you do not think it utterly hopeless then?"

"Yes, I do."

"And you would have me expose myself to rejection?"

"Exactly so!"

"Really, sir, I do not understand you."

"Well, I will explain. Nothing short of rejection will possibly cure you of this malady; and it is of the last importance to your future career, that you should be freed as soon as possible from this sickly condition of thought and feeling—a condition in which your mind will do nothing, and in which your best days will be wasted. Blackstone can only hope to be taken up when you have done with her."

"Stay, sir—that is she below."

"Who?"

"Margaret——"

"Who is with her?"

"The stranger—this man, Stevens."

"Ha! your counsellor, that would be? Ah! William, you did not tell me all."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ENTHUSIAST.

THE cheeks of the youth glowed. He felt how much he had suppressed in his conference with his venerable counsellor. Mr. Calvert did not press the topic, and the two remained silent, looking down, from the shaded spot where they lay, upon the progress of Margaret Cooper and her present attendant, Stevens. The eminence on which they rested was sufficiently lofty, as we have seen, to enable them, though themselves almost concealed from sight, to take in the entire scene, not only below but around them; and the old man, sharing now in the interest of his young companion, surveyed the progress of the new-comers with a keen sense of curiosity which, for a time, kept him silent. The emotions of William Hinkley were such as to deprive him of all desire for speech; and each, accordingly, found sufficient employment in brooding over his own awakened fancies. Even had they spoken in the ordinary tone of their voices, the sounds could not have reached the persons approaching on the opposite side. They drew nigh, evidently unconscious that the scene was occupied by any other than themselves. Ned Hinkley was half-shrouded in the shrubbery that environed the jutting crag upon which his form was crouched, and they were not yet sufficiently nigh to the tarn to perceive his projecting rod, and the gaudy fly which he kept skipping about upon the surface. The walk which they pursued was an ancient Indian footpath.

which had without doubt conducted the red warriors, a thousand times before, to a spot of seclusion and refreshment after their long day's conflict on the "*dark and bloody ground.*" It was narrow and very winding, and had been made so in order to lessen the fatigue of an ascent which, though gradual enough, was yet considerable, and would have produced great weariness, finally, had the pathway been more direct.

The circuitousness of this route, which lay clear enough before the eyes of our two friends upon the eminence—crawling, as it did, up the woodland slopes with the sinuous course of a serpent—was yet visible to Ned Hinkley, on his lowlier perch, only at its starting-point, upon the very margin of the lake. He, accordingly, saw as little of the approaching persons as they had seen of him. They advanced slowly, and seemed to be mutually interested in their subject of conversation. The action of Stevens was animated. The air and attitude of Margaret Cooper was that of interest and attention. It was with something little short of agony that William Hinkley beheld them pause upon occasion, and confront each other as if the topic was of a nature to arrest the feet and demand the whole fixed attention of the hearer.

It will be conjectured that Alfred Stevens had pressed his opportunities with no little industry. Enough has been shown to account for the readiness of that reception which Margaret Cooper was prepared to give him. Her intelligence was keen, quick, and penetrating. She discovered at a glance, not his hypocrisy, but that his religious enthusiasm was not of a sort to become very tyrannical. The air of mischief which was expressed upon his face when the venerable John Cross proposed to purge her library of its obnoxious contents, commended him to her as a sort of ally; and the sympathy with herself, which such a conjecture promised, made her forgetful of the disingenuousness of his conduct if her suspicions were true. But there were

some other particulars which, in her mind, tended to dissipate the distance between them. She recognised the individual. She remembered the bold, dashing youth, who, a few months before, had encountered her on the edge of the village, and, after they had parted, had ridden back to the spot where she still loitered, for a second look. To that very spot had she conducted him on their ramble that afternoon.

“Do you know this place, Mr. Stevens?” she demanded with an arch smile, sufficiently good-humored to convince the adventurer that, if she had any suspicions, they were not of a nature to endanger his hopes.

“Do I not!” he said, with an air of *empressement* which caused her to look down.

“I thought I recollected you,” she said, a moment after.

“Ah! may I hope that I did not then offend you with my impertinence? But the truth is, I was so struck—pardon me if I say it—with the singular and striking difference between the group of damsels I had seen and *the one*—the surprise was so great—the pleasure so unlooked for—that—”

The eye of Margaret Cooper brightened, her cheek glowed, and her form rose somewhat proudly. The arch-hypocrite paused judiciously, and she spoke:—

“Nay, nay, Mr. Stevens, these fine speeches do not pass current. You would make the same upon occasion to any one of the said group of damsels, were you to be her escort.”

“But I would scarcely ride back for a second look,” he responded, in a subdued tone of voice, while looking with sad expressiveness into her eyes. These were cast down upon the instant, and the color upon her cheeks was heightened.

“Come,” said she, making an effort, “there is nothing here to interest us.”

"Except memory," he replied; "I shall never forget the spot."

She hurried forward, and he joined her. She had received the impression which he intended to convey, without declaring as much—namely, that his return to Charlemont had been prompted by that one glimpse which he had then had of her person. Still, that nothing should be left in doubt, he proceeded to confirm the impression by other suggestions:—

"You promise to show me a scene of strange beauty, but your whole village is beautiful, Miss Cooper. I remember how forcibly it struck me as I gained the ascent of the opposite hills coming in from the east. It was late in the day, the sun was almost setting, and his faintest but loveliest beams fell upon the cottages in the valley, and lay with a strange, quiet beauty among the grass-plats, and the flower-ranges, and upon the neat, white palings."

"It is beautiful," she said with a sigh, "but its beauty does not content me. It is too much beauty; it is too soft; for, though it has its rocks and huge trees, yet it lacks wildness and sublimity. The rocks are not sufficiently abrupt, the steeps not sufficiently great; there are no chasms, no waterfalls—only purling brooks and quiet walks."

"I have felt this already," he replied; "but there is yet a deficiency which you have not expressed, Miss Cooper."

"What is that?" she demanded.

"It is the moral want. You have no life here; and that which would least content me would be this very repose—the absence of provocation—the strife—the triumph! These, I take it, are the deficiencies which you really feel when you speak of the want of crag, and chasm, and waterfall."

"You, too, are ambitious, then!" she said quickly; "but how do you reconcile this feeling with your profession?"

She looked up, and caught his eye tenderly fixed upon her.

“Ah!” said he, “Miss Cooper, there are some situations in which we find it easy to reconcile all discrepancies.”

If the language lacked explicitness, the look did not. He proceeded:—

“If I mistake not, Miss Cooper, you will be the last one to blame me for not having stifled my ambition, even at the calls of duty and profession.”

“Blame you, sir? Far from it. I should think you very unfortunate indeed, if you could succeed in stifling ambition at any calls, nor do I exactly see how duty should require it.”

“If I pursue the profession of the divine?” he answered hesitatingly.

“Yes—perhaps—but that is not certain?” There was some timidity in the utterance of this inquiry. He evaded it.

“I know not yet what I shall be,” he replied with an air of self-reproach; “I fear I have too much of this fiery ardor which we call ambition to settle down into the passive character of the preacher.”

“Oh, do not, do not!” she exclaimed impetuously; then, as if conscious of the impropriety, she stopped short in the sentence, while increasing her forward pace.

“What!” said he, “you think that would effectually stifle it?”

“Would it not—does it not in most men?”

“Perhaps; but this depends upon the individual. Churchmen have a great power—the greatest in any country.”

“Over babes and sucklings!” she said scornfully.

“And, through these, over the hearts of men and women.”

“But these, too, are babes and sucklings—people to be scared by shadows—the victims of their own miserable fears and superstitions!”

“Nevertheless, these confer power. Where there is power, there is room for ambition. You recollect that churchmen have put their feet upon the necks of princes.”

“Yes, but that was when there was one church only in Christendom. It was a monopoly, and consequently a tyranny. Now there are a thousand, always in conflict, and serving very happily to keep each other from mischief. They no longer put their feet on princes’ necks, though I believe that the princes are no better off for this forbearance—there are others who do. But only fancy that this time was again, and think of the comical figure our worthy brother John Cross would make, mounting from such a noble horse-block!”

The idea was sufficiently pleasant to make Stevens laugh.

“I am afraid I shall have greater trouble in converting you, Miss Cooper, than any other of the flock in Charlemont. I doubt that your heart is stubborn—that you are an insensible!”

“I insensible!” she exclaimed, and with such a look! The expression of sarcasm had passed, as with the rapidity of a lightning-flash, from her beautiful lips; and a silent tear rose, tremulous and large, with the same instantaneous emotion, beneath her long, dark eyelashes. She said nothing more, but, with eyes cast down, went forward. Stevens was startled with the suddenness of these transitions. They proved, at least, how completely her mind was at the control of her blood. Hitherto, he had never met with a creature so liberally endowed by nature, who was, at the same time, so perfectly unsophisticated. The subject was gratifying as a study alone, even if it conferred no pleasure, and awakened no hopes.

“Do not mistake me,” he exclaimed, hurrying after, “I had no purpose to impute to you any other insensibility except to that of the holy truths of religion.”

She looked up and smiled archly. There was another transition from cloud to sunlight.

“What! are you so doubtful of your own ministry?”

“In your case, I am.”

“Why?”

“You will force me to betake myself to studies more severe than any I have yet attempted.”

She was flattered but she uttered a natural disclaimer.

“No, no! I am presumptuous. I trust you will teach me. Begin — do not hesitate — I will listen.”

“To move you I must not come in the garments of methodism. That faith will never be yours.”

“What faith shall it be?”

“That of catholicism. I must come armed with authority. I must carry the sword and keys of St. Peter. I must be sustained by all the pomps of that church of pomps and triumphs. My divine mission must speak through signs and symbols, through stately stole, pontifical ornaments, the tiara of religious state on the day of its most solemn ceremonial; and with these I must bring the word of power, born equally of intellect and soul, and my utterance must be in the language of divinest poesy!”

“Ah! you mistake! That last will be enough. Speak to me in poesy — let me hear that — and you will subdue me, I believe, to any faith that you teach. For I can not but believe the faith that is endowed with the faculty of poetic utterance.”

“In truth it is a divine utterance — perhaps the only divine utterance. Would I had it for your sake.”

“Oh! you must have it. I fancy I see it in some things that you have said. You read poetry, I am sure — I am sure you love it.”

“I do! I know not anything that I love half so well.”

“Then you write it?” she asked eagerly.

“No! the gift has been denied me.”

She looked at him with eyes of regret.

“How unfortunate,” she said.

“Doubly so, as the deficiency seems to disappoint you.”

She did not seem to heed the flattery of this remark, nor did she appear to note the expression of face with which it

was accompanied. Her feelings took the ascendancy. She spoke out her uncommissioned thoughts and fancies musingly, as if without the knowledge of her will.

“I fancy that I could kneel down and worship the poet, and feel no shame, no humility. It is the only voice that enchants me — that leads me out from myself; that carries me where it pleases and finds for me companions in the solitude; songs in the storm; affections in the barren desert! Even here, it brings me friends and fellowships. How voiceless would be all these woods to me had it no voice speaking to, and in, my soul. Hoping nothing, and performing nothing here, it is my only consolation. It reconciles me to this wretched spot. It makes endurance tolerable. If it were not for this companionship — if I heard not this voice in my sorrows, soothing my desolation, I could freely die! — die here, beside this rock, without making a struggle to go forward, even to reach the stream that flows quietly beyond!”

She had stopped in her progress while this stream of enthusiasm poured from her lips. Her action was suited to her utterance. Unaccustomed to restraint — nay, accustomed only to pour herself forth to woods, and trees, and waters, she was scarcely conscious of the presence of any other companion, yet she looked even while she spoke, in the eyes of Stevens. He gazed on her with glances of unconcealed admiration. The unsophisticated nature which led her to express that enthusiasm which a state of conventional existence prompts us, through fear of ridicule, industriously to conceal, struck him with the sense of a new pleasure. The novelty alone had its charm; but there were other sources of delight. The natural grace and dignity of the enthusiastic girl, adapting to such words the appropriate action, gave to her beauty, which was now in its first bloom, all the glow which is derived from intellectual inspiration. Her whole person spoke. All was vital, spiritual, expressive, animated; and when the last word lingered

on her lips, Stevens could scarcely repress the impulse which prompted him to clasp her in his embrace.

"Margaret!" he exclaimed — "Miss Cooper! — you are yourself a poet!"

"No, no!" she murmured, rather than spoke; — "would I were! — a dreamer only — a self-deluded dreamer."

"You can not deceive me!" he continued, "I see it in your eyes, your action; I hear it in your words. I can not be deceived. You are a poet — you will, and must be one!"

"And if I were!" she said mournfully, "of what avail would it be here? What heart in this wilderness would be touched by song of mine? Whose ear could I soothe in this cold and sterile hamlet? Where would be the temple — who the worshippers — even were the priestess all that her vanity would believe, or her prayers and toils might make her? No, no! I am no poet; and if I were, better that the flame should go out — vanish altogether in the smoke of its own delusions — than burn with a feeble light, unseen, untrimmed, unhonored — perhaps, beheld with the scornful eye of vulgar and unappreciating ignorance!"

"Such is not your destiny, Margaret Cooper," replied Stevens, using the freedom of address, perhaps unconsciously, which the familiarity of country life is sometimes found to tolerate. "Such is not your destiny, Margaret. The flame will not go out — it will be loved and worshipped!"

"Ah! never! what is here to justify such a hope — such a dream?"

"Nothing *here*; but it was not of Charlemont I spoke. The destiny which has endowed you with genius will not leave it to be extinguished here. There will come a worshipper, Margaret. There will come one, equally capable to honor the priestess and to conduct her to befitting altars. This is not your home, though it may have been your place of trial and novitiate. Here, without the restraint of cold,

oppressive, social forms, your genius has ripened — your enthusiasm has been kindled into proper glow — your heart, and mind, and imagination, have kept equal pace to an equal maturity! Perhaps this was fortunate. Had you grown up in more polished and worldly circles, you would have been compelled to subdue the feelings and fancies which now make your ordinary language the language of a muse."

"Oh! speak not so, I implore you. I am afraid you mock me."

"No! on my soul, I do not. I think all that I say, More than that, I feel it, Margaret. Trust to me — confide in me — make me your friend! Believe me, I am not altogether what I seem."

An arch smile once more possessed her eyes.

"Ah! I could guess that! But sit you here. Here is a flower — a beautiful, small flower, with a dark blue eye. See it — how humbly it hides amid the grass. It is the last flower of the season. I know not its name. I am no botanist. but it is beautiful without a name, and it is the last flower of the season. Sit down on this rock, and I will sing you Moore's beautiful song, "'Tis the last of its kindred.'"

"Nay, sing me something of your own, Margaret."

"No, no! Don't speak of me, and mine, in the same breath with Moore. You will make me repent of having seen you. Sit down and be content with Moore, or go without your song altogether."

He obeyed her, and the romantic and enthusiastic girl, seating herself upon a fragment of rock beside the path, sang the delicate and sweet verses of the Irish poet, with a natural felicity of execution, which amply compensated for the absence of those Italian arts, which so frequently elevate the music at the expense of the sentiment. Stevens looked and listened, and half forgot himself in the breathlessness of his attention — his eye fastened with a gaze of

absolute devotion on her features, until, having finished her song, she detected the expression of his face, and started, with blushing cheeks, to her feet.

"Oh! sweet!" he murmured as he offered to take her hand, but she darted forward, and following her, he found himself a few moments after, standing by her side, and looking down upon one of the loveliest lakes that ever slept in the embrace of jealous hills.

CHAPTER XV.

A CATASTROPHE.

"You disparage these scenes," said Stevens, after several moments had been given to the survey of that before him, "and yet you have drawn your inspiration from them—the fresh food which stimulates poetry and strengthens enthusiasm. Here you learned to be contemplative; and here, in solitude, was your genius nursed. Do not be ungrateful, Margaret—you owe to these very scenes all that you are, and all that you may become."

"Stay! before I answer. Do you see yon bird?"

"Where?"

"In the west—there!" she pointed with her fingers, catching his wrist unconsciously, at the same time, with the other hand, as if more certainly to direct his gaze.

"I see it—what bird is it?"

"An eagle! See how it soars and swings; effortless, as if supported by some external power!"

"Indeed—it seems small for an eagle."

"It is one nevertheless! There are thousands of them that roost among the hills in that quarter. I know the place thoroughly. The heights are the greatest that we have in the surrounding country. The distance from this spot is about five miles. He, no doubt, has some fish, or bird now within his talons, with which to feed his young. He will feed them, and they will grow strong, and will

finally use their own wings. Shall he continue to feed them after that? Must they never seek their own food?"

"Surely they must."

"If these solitudes have nursed me, must they continue to nurse me always? Must I never use the wings to which they have given vigor? Must I never employ the sight to which they have imparted vigilance? Must I never go forth, and strive and soar, and make air, and earth, and sea, tributary to my wing and eye? Alas! I am a woman!—and her name is weakness! You tell me of what I am, and of what I may become. But what am I? I mock myself too often with this question to believe all your fine speeches. And what may I become? Alas! who can tell me that? I know my strength, but I also know my weakness. I feel the burning thoughts of my brain; I feel the yearning impulses in my heart; but they bring nothing—they promise nothing—I feel the pang of constant denial. I feel that I can be nothing!"

"Say not so, Margaret—think not so, I beseech you. With your genius, your enthusiasm—your powers of expression—there is nothing, becoming in your sex, and worthy of it, which you may not be."

"You can not deceive me! It might be so, if this were Italy; there, where the very peasant burns with passion, and breathes his feeblest and meanest thoughts and desires in song. But here, they already call me mad! They look on me as one doomed to Bedlam. They avoid me with sentiments and looks of distrust, if not of fear; and when I am looking into the cloud, striving to pierce, with dilating eye its wild yellow flashing centres, they draw their flaxen-headed infants to their breasts, and mutter their thanks to God, that he has not, in a fit of wrath, made them to resemble me! If, forgetful of earth, and trees, and the human stocks around me, I pour forth the language of the great song-masters, they grin at my insanity—they hold me incapable of reason, and declare their ideas of what

that is, by asking who knows most of the dairy, the cabbage-patch, the spinning-wheel, the darning-needle—who can best wash Polly's or Patty's face and comb its head—can chop up sausage-meat the finest—make the lightest paste, and more economically dispense the sugar in serving up the tea! and these are what is expected of woman! These duties of the meanest slave! From her mind nothing is expected. Her enthusiasm terrifies, her energy offends, and if her taste is ever challenged, it is to the figures upon a quilt or in a flower-garden, where the passion seems to be to make flowers grow in stars, and hearts, and crescents. What has woman to expect where such are the laws; where such are the expectations from her? What am I to hope? I, who seem to be set apart—to feel nothing like the rest—to live in a different world—to dream of foreign things—to burn with a hope which to them is frenzy, and speak a language which they neither understand nor like! What can I be, in such a world? Nothing, nothing! I do not deceive myself. I can never hope to be anything."

Her enthusiasm hurried her forward. In spite of himself, Stevens was impressed. He ceased to think of his evil purposes in the superior thoughts which her wild, unregulated energy inspired. He scarcely wondered, indeed—if it were true—that her neighbors fancied her insane. The indignation of a powerful mind denied—denied justice—baffled in its aims—conscious of the importance of all its struggles against binding and blinding circumstances—is akin to insanity!—is apt to express itself in the defiant tones of a fierce and feverish frenzy.

"Margaret," said he, as she paused and waited for him, "you are not right in everything. You forget that your lonely little village of Charlemont, is not only not the world, but that it is not even an American world. America is not Italy, I grant you, nor likely soon to become so; but if you fancy there are not cities even in our country, where

genius such as yours would be felt and worshipped, you are mistaken."

"Do you believe there are such?" she demanded incredulously.

"I *know* there are!"

"No! no! I know better. You can not deceive me. It can not be so. I know the sort of genius which is popular in those cities. It is the gentleman and lady genius. Look at their verses for example. I can show you thousands of such things that come to us here, from all quarters of the Union—verses written by nice people—people of small tastes and petty invention, who would not venture upon the utterance of a noble feeling, or a bold sentiment of originality, for fear of startling the fashionable nerves with the strong words which such a novelty would require. Consider, in the first place, how conclusive it is of the feeblest sort of genius that these people should employ themselves, from morning to night, in spinning their small strains, scraps of verse, song, and sonnet, and invariably on such subjects of commonplace, as can not admit of originality, and do not therefore task reflection. Not an infant dies or is born, but is made the subject of verse; nay, its smiles and tears are put on record; its hobby-horse, and its infant ideas as they begin to bud and breathe aloud. Then comes the eternal strain about summer blooms and spring flowers; autumn's melancholy and winter's storms, until one sickens of the intolerable monotony. Such are the things that your great cities demand. Such things content them. Speak the fearless and always strange language of originality and strength, and you confound and terrify them."

"But, Margaret, these things are held at precisely the same value in the big cities as they are held by you here in Charlemont. The intelligent people smile—they do not applaud. If they encourage at all it is by silence."

"No! no! that you might say, if, unhappily, public

opinion did not express itself. The same magazines which bring us the verses bring us the criticism."

"That is to say, the editor puffs his contributors, and disparages those who are not. Look at the rival journal and you will find these denounced and another set praised and beplastered."

"Ah! and what would be my hope, my safety, in communities which tolerate these things; in which the number of just and sensible people is so small that they dare not speak, or can not influence those who have better courage? Where would be my triumphs? I, who would no more subscribe to the petty tyranny of conventional law, than to that baser despotism which is wielded by a mercenary editor, in the absence of a stern justice in the popular mind. Here I may pine to death—there, my heart would burst with its own convulsions."

"No! Margaret, no! It is because they have not the genius, that such small birds are let to sing. Let them but hear the true minstrel—let them but know that there is a muse, and how soon would the senseless twitter which they now tolerate be hushed in undisturbing silence. In the absence of better birds they bear with what they have. In the absence of the true muse they build no temple—they throng not to hear. Nay, even now, already, they look to the west for the minstrel and the muse—to these very woods. There is a tacit and universal feeling in the Atlantic country, that leads them to look with expectation to the Great West, for the genius whose song is to give us fame. 'When?' is the difficult—the only question. Ah! might I but say to them—'now'—the muse is already here!"

He took her hand—she did not withhold it; but her look was subdued—the fires had left her eyes—her whole frame trembled with the recoil of those feelings—the relaxation of those nerves—the tension of which we have endeavored feebly to display. Her cheek was no longer

flushed but pale; her lips trembled—her voice was low and faint—only a broken and imperfect murmur; and her glance was cast upon the ground.

“You!” she exclaimed.

“Yes, I! Have I not said I am not altogether what I seem? Ah! I may not yet say more. But I am not without power, Margaret, in other and more powerful regions. I too have had my triumphs; I too can boast that the minds of other men hang for judgment upon the utterance of mine.”

She looked upward to his glance with a stranger expression of timidity than her features had before exhibited. The form of Stevens had insensibly risen in seeming elevation as he spoke, and the expression of his face was that of a more human pride. He continued:—

“My voice is one of authority in circles where yours would be one of equal attraction and command. I can not promise you an Italian devotion, Margaret; our people, though sufficiently enthusiastic, are too sensible to ridicule to let the heart and blood speak out with such freedom as they use in the warmer regions of the South: but the homage will be more intellectual, more steady, and the fame more enduring. You must let your song be heard—you must give me the sweet privilege of making it known to ears whose very listening is fame.”

“Ah!” she said, “what you say makes me feel how foolishly I have spoken. What is my song? what have I done? what am I? what have I to hope? I have done nothing—I am nothing! I have suffered, like a child, a miserable vanity to delude me, and I have poured into the ears of a stranger those ravings which I have hitherto uttered to the hills and forests. You laugh at me now—you must.”

The paleness on her cheek was succeeded by the deepest flush of crimson. She withdrew her hand from his grasp.

“Laugh at you, Margaret! You have awakened my wonder. Struck with you when we first met—”

“Nay, no more of that, but let us follow these windings; they lead us to the tarn. It is the prettiest Indian path, and my favorite spot. Here I ramble morning and eve, and try to forget those vain imaginings and foolish strivings of thought which I have just inflicted upon you. The habit proved too much for my prudence, and I spoke as if you were not present. Possibly, had you not spoken in reply, I should have continued until now.”

“Why did I speak?”

“Ah! it is better. I wish you had spoken sooner. But follow me quickly. The sunlight is now falling in a particular line which gives us the loveliest effect, shooting its rays through certain fissures of the rock, and making a perfect arrow-path along the water. You would fancy that Apollo had just dismissed a golden shaft from his quiver, so direct is the levelled light along the surface of the lake.”

Speaking thus, they came in sight of the party on the opposite hills, as we have already shown—without, however, perceiving them in turn. It will be conjectured without difficulty that, with a nature so full of impulse, so excitable, as that of Margaret Cooper—particularly in the company of an adroit man like Stevens, whose purpose was to encourage her in that language and feeling of egotism which, while it was the most grateful exercise to herself, was that which most effectually served to blind her to his designs—her action was always animated, expressively adapting itself, not only to the words she uttered, but, even when she did not speak, to the feelings by which she was governed. It was the art of Stevens to say little except by suggestives. A single word, or brief sentence, from his lips, judiciously applied to her sentiments or situation, readily excited her to speech; and this utterance necessarily brought with it the secret of her soul, the desire of her heart, nay, the very

shape of the delusion which possessed it. The wily libertine, deliberate as the demon to which we have likened him, could provoke the warmth which he did not share—could stimulate the eloquence which he would not feel—could coldly, like some Mephistopheles of science, subject the golden-winged bird or butterfly to the torturous process of examination, with a pin thrust through its vitals, and gravely dilate on its properties, its rich plumage, and elaborate finish of detail, without giving heed to those writhings which declared its agonies. It is not meant to be understood that Stevens found no pleasure himself in the display of that wild, unschooled imagination which was the prevailing quality in the mind of Margaret Cooper. He was a man of education and taste. He could be pleased as an amateur; but he wanted the moral to be touched, and to sympathize with a being so gifted and so feeble—so high aiming, yet so liable to fall.

The ardor of Margaret Cooper, and the profound devotion which it was the policy of Stevens to display, necessarily established their acquaintance, in a very short time, on the closest footing of familiarity. With a nature such as hers, all that is wanted is sympathy—all that she craves is sympathy—and, to win this, no toil is too great, no sufferance too severe; alas, how frequently do we see that no penalty is too discouraging! But the confiding spirit never looks for penalties, and seldom dreams of deceit.

What, then, were the emotions of William Hinkley as he beheld the cordiality which distinguished the manner of Margaret Cooper as she approached the edge of the lake with her companion? In the space of a single week, this stranger had made greater progress in her acquaintance than *he* had been able to make in a period of years. The problem which distressed him was beyond his power to solve. His heart was very full; the moisture was already in his eyes; and when he beheld the animated gestures of the maid—when he saw her turn to her companion, and

meet his gaze without shrinking, while her own was fixed in gratified contemplation—he scarcely restrained himself from jumping to his feet. The old man saw his emotion.

“William,” he said, “did I understand you that this young stranger was a preacher?”

“No, sir, but he seeks to be one. He is studying for the ministry, under Brother Cross.”

“Brother Cross is a good man, and is scarcely likely to have anything to do with any other than good men. I suppose he knows everything about the stranger?”

William Hinkley narrated all that was known on the subject in the village. In the innocence of his heart, Brother Cross had described Alfred Stevens as a monument of his own powers of conversion. Under God, he had been a blessed instrument for plucking this brand from the burning. A modified account of the brandy-flask accompanied the narrative. Whether it was that Mr. Calvert, who had been a man of the world, saw something in the story itself, and in the ludicrousness of the event, which awakened his suspicions, or whether the carriage of Alfred Stevens, as he walked with Margaret Cooper, was rather that of a young gallant than a young student in theology, may admit of question; but it was very certain that the suspicions of the old gentleman were somewhat awakened.

Believing himself to be alone with his fair companion, Alfred Stevens was not as scrupulous of the rigidity of manner which, if not actually prescribed to persons occupying his professional position, is certainly expected from them; and, by a thousand little acts of gallantry, he proved himself much more at home as a courtier and a ladies' man than as one filled with the overflow of divine grace, and thoughtful of nothing less than the serious earnest of his own soul. His hand was promptly extended to assist the progress of his fair companion—a service which was singularly unnecessary in the case of one to whom daily rambles, over hill and through forest, had imparted a most un

feminine degree of vigor. Now he broke the branch away from before her path ; and now, stooping suddenly, he gathered for her the pale flower of autumn.

These little acts of courtesy, so natural to the gentleman, were anything but natural to one suddenly impressed with the ascetical temper of methodism. Highly becoming in both instances, they were yet strangely at variance with the straight-laced practices of the thoroughgoing Wesleyan, who sometimes fancies that the condition of souls is so desperate as to leave no time for good manners. Mr. Calvert had no fault to find with Stevens's civility, but there was certainly an inconsistency between his deportment now, and those characteristics which were to be predicated of the manner and mode of his very recent conversion. Besides, there was the story of the brandy-flask, in which Calvert saw much less of honor either to John Cross or his neophyte. But the old man did not express his doubts to his young friend, and they sat together, watching, in a silence only occasionally broken by a monosyllable, the progress of the unconscious couple below.

Meanwhile, our fisherman, occupying his lonely perch just above the stream, had been plying his vocation with all the silent diligence of one to the manner born. Once busy with his angle, and his world equally of thought and observation became confined to the stream before his eyes, and the victim before his imagination. Scarcely seen by his companions on the heights above, he had succeeded in taking several very fine fish ; and had his liberality been limited to the supper-table of his venerable friend Calvert, he would long before have given himself respite, and temporary immunity to the rest of the finny tribe remaining in the tarn. But Ned Hinkley thought of all his neighbors, not omitting the two rival widows, Mesdames Cooper and Thackeray.

Something too, there was in the sport, which, on the present occasion, beguiled him rather longer than his wont.

More than once had his eye detected, from the advantageous and jutting rock where he lay concealed, just above the water, the dark outlines of a fish, one of the largest he had ever seen in the lake, whose brown sides, and occasionally flashing fins, excited his imagination and offered a challenge to his skill, which provoked him into something like a feeling of personal hostility.

The fish moved slowly to and fro, not often in sight, but at such regularly-recurring periods as to keep up the exciting desire which his very first appearance had awakened in the mind of his enemy.

To Ned Hinkley he was the beau-ideal of the trout genius. He was certainly the hermit-trout of the tarn. Such coolness, such strength, such size, such an outline, and then such sagacity. That trout was a triton among his brethren. A sort of Dr. Johnson among fishes. Ned Hinkley could imagine—for on such subjects his imagination kindled—how like an oracle must be the words of such a trout, to his brethren, gathering in council in their deep-down hole—or driven by a shower under the cypress log—or in any other situation in which an oracle would be apt to say, looking around him with fierceness mingled with contempt, “Let no dog bark.” Ned Hinkley could also fancy the contemplations of such a trout as he witnessed the efforts made to beguile him out of the water.

“Not to be caught by a fly like that, my lad!” and precisely as if the trout had spoken what was certainly whispered in his own mind, the fisherman silently changed his gilded, glittering figure on his hook for one of browner plumage—one of the autumn tribe of flies which stoop to the water from the overhanging trees, and glide off for twenty paces in the stream, to dart up again to the trees, in as many seconds, if not swallowed by some watchful fisher-trout, like the one then before the eyes of our companion.

Though his fancy had become excited, Ned Hinkley was

not impatient. With a cautious hand he conducted the fly down the stream with the flickering, fidgety motion which the real insect would have employed. The keen-nosed trout turned with the movements of the fly, but philosophically kept aloof. Now he might be seen to sink, now to rise, now he glided close under the rock where the angler reclined, and, even in the very deep waters which were there, which were consequently very dark, so great was the size of the animal, that its brown outline was yet to be seen, with its slightly-waving tail, and at moments the flash of its glittering eye, as, inclining on its side, it glanced cunningly upward through the water.

Again did Ned Hinkley consult his resources. Fly after fly was taken from his box, and suffered to glide upon the stream. The wary fish did not fail to bestow some degree of attention upon each, but his regards were too deliberate for the success of the angler, and he had almost begun to despair, when he observed a slight quivering movement in the object of pursuit which usually prepares the good sportsman to expect his prey. The fins were laid aback. The motion of the fish became steady; a slight vibration of the tail only was visible; and in another moment he darted, and was hooked.

Then came the struggle. Ned Hinkley had never met with a more formidable prey. The reel was freely given, but the strain was great upon shaft and line. There was no such thing as contending. The trout had his way, and went down and off, though it might have been observed that the fisherman took good care to baffle his efforts to retreat in the direction of the old log which had harbored him, and the tangling alders, which might have been his safest places of retreat. The fish carried a long stretch of line, but the hook was still in his jaws, and this little annoyance soon led him upon other courses. The line became relaxed, and with this sign, Ned Hinkley began to amuse himself in tiring his victim.

This required skill and promptness rather than strength. The hermit-trout was led to and fro by a judicious turn of wrist or elbow. His efforts had subsided to a few spasmodic struggles—an occasional struggle ending with a shiver, and then he was brought to the surface. This was followed by a last great convulsive effort, when his tail churned the water into a little circle of foam, which disappeared the moment his struggles were over. But a few seconds more were necessary to lift the prey into sight of all the parties near to the lake. They had seen some of the struggle, and had imagined the rest. Neither Margaret Cooper nor Stevens had suspected the presence of the fisherman until drawn to the spot by this trial of strength.

“What a prodigious fish!” exclaimed Stevens; “can we go to the spot?”

“Oh! easily—up the rocks on the left there is a path. I know it well. I have traversed it often. Will you go? The view is very fine from that quarter.”

“Surely: but who is the fisherman?”

“Ned Hinkley, the nephew of the gentleman with whom you stay. He is a hunter, fisherman, musician—everything. A lively, simple, but well-meaning young person. It is something strange that his cousin William Hinkley is not with him. They are usually inseparable.”

And with these words she led the way for her companion following the edge of the lake until reaching the point where the rocks seemed to form barriers to their further progress, but which her agility and energy had long since enabled her to overcome.

“A bold damsel!” said Calvert, as he viewed her progress. “She certainly does not intend to clamber over that range of precipices. She will peril her life.”

“No!” said William Hinkley; “she has done it often to my great terror. I have been with her more than once over the spot myself. She seems to me to have no fear, and to delight in the most dangerous places.”

"But her companion! If he's not a more active man than he seems he will hardly succeed so well."

William was silent, his eye watching with the keenest interest the progress of the two. In a few moments he started to his feet with some appearance of surprise.

"What's the matter?" demanded Calvert.

"She does not seem as if she wished to ascend the rocks, but she's aiming to keep along the ledges that overhang the stream, so as to get where Ned is. That can hardly be done by the surest-footed, and most active. Many of the rocks are loose. The ledge is very narrow, and even where there is room for the feet there are such projections above as leave no room for the body. I will halloo to her, and tell her of the danger."

"If you halloo, you will increase the danger—you will alarm her," said the old man.

"It will be best to stop her now, in season, when she can go back. Stay for me, sir, I can run along on the heights so as to overlook them, and can then warn without alarming."

"Do so, my son, and hasten, for she seems bent on going forward. The preacher follows but slowly, and she stops for him. Away!"

The youth darted along the hill, pursuing something of a table-line which belonged to the equal elevation of the range of rock on which he stood. The rock was formed of successive and shelving ledges, at such intervals, however, as to make it no easy task—certainly no safe one—to drop from one to the other. The perch of Ned Hinkley, was a projection from the lowest of these ledges, running brokenly along the margin of the basin until lost in the forest slope over which Margaret Cooper had led her companion.

If it was a task to try the best vigor and agility—to say nothing of courage—of the ablest mountaineer, to ascend the abrupt ledges from below, aiming at the highest point

of elevation — the attempt was still more startling to follow the lower ledges, some of which hung, loosened and tottering, just above the deepest parts of the lake. Yet, with that intrepidity which marked her character, this was the very task which Margaret Cooper had proposed to herself. William Hinkley had justly said that she did not seem to know fear; and when Stevens with the natural sense of caution which belongs to one to whom such performances are unusual, suggested to her that such a pathway seemed very dangerous——

“Dangerous!” she exclaimed, standing upon the merest pinnacle of a loosened fragment which rested on the very margin of the stream.

“Did you never perceive that there was a loveliness in danger which you scarcely felt to be half so great in any other object or situation. I love the dangerous. It seems to lift my soul, to make my heart bound with joy and the wildest delight. I know nothing so delightful as storm and thunder. I look, and see the tall trees shivering and going down with a roar, and feel that I could sing—sing aloud—and believe that there are voices, like mine, then singing through all the tempest. But there is no danger here. I have clambered up these ledges repeatedly—up to the very top. Here, you see, we have an even pathway along the edge. We have nothing to do but to set the foot down firmly.”

But Stevens was not so sure, and his opinion on the beauties of the dangerous did not chime exactly with hers. Still, he did not lack for courage, and his pride did not suffer him to yield in a contest with a female. He gazed on her with increasing wonder. If he saw no loveliness in danger—he saw no little loveliness just then in her; and she might be said to personify danger to his eyes. Her tall, symmetrical, and commanding figure, perched on the trembling pinnacle of rock which sustained her, was as firm and erect as if she stood on the securest spot of land.

Nor was her position that of simple security and firmness. The grace of her attitude, her extended and gently waving arm as she spoke, denoted a confidence which could only have arisen from a perfect unconsciousness of danger. Her swan-like neck, with the face slightly turned back to him; the bright flashing eyes, and the smile of equal pride and dignity on her exquisitely-chiselled mouth; — all formed a picture for the artist's study, which almost served to divert the thoughts of Stevens from the feeling of danger which he expressed.

While he gazed, he heard a voice calling in tones of warning from above; and, at the sound, he perceived a change in the expression of Margaret Cooper's face, from confidence and pride, to scorn and contempt. At the same time she darted forward from rock to rock, with a sort of defying haste, which made him tremble for her safety, and left him incapable to follow. The call was repeated; and Stevens looked up, and recognised the person of the youth whom he had counselled that morning with such bad success.

If the progress of Margaret Cooper appeared dangerous in his sight, that of the young man was evidently more so. He was leaping, with the cool indifference of one who valued his life not a pin's fee, from ledge to ledge, down the long steppes which separated the several reaches of the rock formation. The space between was very considerable, the descent abrupt; the youth had no steadying pole to assist him, but flying rather than leaping, was now beheld in air, and in the next moment stood balancing himself with difficulty, but with success, and without seeming apprehension, on the pinnacle of rock below him. In this way he was approaching the lower ledge along which Margaret Cooper was hurrying as rapidly as fearlessly, and calling to her as he came, implored her to forbear a progress which was so full of danger.

Stevens fancied he had no reason to love the youth, but

he could not help admiring and envying his equal boldness and agility ; the muscular ease with which he flung himself from point to point, and his sure-footed descent upon the crags and fragments which trembled and tottered beneath the sudden and unaccustomed burden. Charitably wishing that, amid all his agility he might yet make a false step, and find an unexpected and rather cold bath in the lake below, Stevens now turned his eyes upon Margaret Cooper.

She did not answer the counsels of William Hinkley — certainly did not heed them : and, but for the increased impatience of her manner might be supposed not to have heard them. The space between herself and Stevens had increased meanwhile, and looking back, she waited for his approach. She stood on a heavy mass which jutted above the lake, and not six feet from the water. Her right foot was upon the stone, sustaining the whole weight of her person. Her left was advanced and lifted to another fragment which lay beyond. As she looked back she met the eyes of Stevens. Just then he saw the large fragment yield beneath her feet. She seemed suddenly conscious of it in the same moment, and sprung rapidly on that to which her left foot was already advanced. The impetus of this movement, sent the rock over which she had left. This disturbed the balance of that to which she had risen, and while the breath of the stranger hung suspended in the utterance of the meditated warning, the catastrophe had taken place. The stone shrank from beneath her, and, sinking with it, in another moment, she was hidden from sight in the still, deep waters of the lake.

CHAPTER XVI

SOUSING A GURNET.

THE disappearance of Margaret Cooper was succeeded by a shriek from above — a single shriek — a cry of terror and despair; and in the same instant the form of William Hinkley might have been seen cleaving the air, with the boldness of a bird, secure always of his wing, and descending into the lake as nearly as it was possible for him to come, to the spot where she had sunk. Our cooler fisherman looked up to the abrupt eminence, just above his own head, from which his devoted cousin had sprung.

“By gemini!” he exclaimed with an air of serious apprehension, “if William Hinkley hasn’t knocked his life out by that plunge he’s more lucky than I think him. It’s well the lake’s deep enough in this quarter else he’d have tried the strength of hard head against harder rock below. But there’s no time for such nice calculations! We can all swim — that’s a comfort.”

Thus speaking, he followed the example of his cousin, though more quietly, plunging off from his lowlier perch, and cleaving the water, headforemost, with as little commotion as a sullen stone would make sent directly downward to the deep. By this time, however, our former companion, Stevens, had done the same thing. Stevens was no coward, but he had no enthusiasm. He obeyed few impulses. His proceedings were all the result of calculation. He could swim as well as his neighbors. He had no ap-

prehensions on that score ; but he disliked cold water ; and there was an involuntary shrug of the shoulder and shiver of the limbs before he committed himself to the water, which he did with all the deliberation of the cat, who, longing for fish, is yet unwilling to wet her own feet. His deliberation, and the nearness of his position to Margaret Cooper, were so far favorable to his design that he succeeded in finding her first. It must be understood that the events, which we have taken so much time to tell, occupied but a few seconds in the performance. Stevens was in the water quite as quickly as Ned Hinkley, and only not so soon as his more devoted and desperate cousin. If it was an advantage to him to come first in contact with the form of Margaret Cooper, it had nearly proved fatal to him also. In the moment when he encountered her, her outstretched and grasping arms, encircled his neck. They rose together, but he was nearly strangled, and but for the timely interposition of the two cousins, they must probably have both perished.

It was the fortune of our fisherman to relieve the maiden, whom he bore to the opposite shore with a coolness, a skill and spirit, which enabled him to save himself from her desperate but unconscious struggles, while supporting her with a degree of ease and strength which had been acquired while teaching some dozen of the village urchins how to practise an art in which he himself was reckoned a great proficient.

It was fortunate for Stevens that the charities of William Hinkley were more active and indulgent than his own, since, without the timely succor and aid which he afforded, that devout young gentleman would have been made to discontinue his studies very suddenly and have furnished a summary conclusion to this veracious narrative — a consummation which, if it be as devoutly wished by the reader as by the writer, will be a much greater source of annoyance to our publisher than it has proved already. Never had poor

mortal been compelled to drink, at one time, a greater quantity of that celestial beverage, which the Reverend Mr. Pierpont insists is the only liquor drunk at the hotels of heaven. We should be sorry to misrepresent that very gentle gentleman, but we believe that this is substantially his idea: It was unfortunate for Stevens that, previously to this, he had never been accustomed to drink much of this beverage in its original strength anywhere. He had been too much in the habit of diluting it; and being very temperate always in his enjoyment of the creature comforts, he had never taken it, even when thus diluted, except in very moderate quantities.

In consequence of his former abstemiousness, the quantity which he now swallowed nearly strangled him. He was about to take his last draught with many wry faces, when the timely arms of the two cousins, by no very sparing application of force withdrew him from the grasp of the damsel; and without very well understanding the process, or any particulars of his extrication, he found himself stretched upon the banks over which he had lately wandered, never dreaming of any such catastrophe; discharging from his stomach by no effort of his own, a large quantity of foreign ingredients—the ordinary effect, we are given to understand, of every inordinate indulgence in strong waters.

Our excellent old friend, Mr. Calvert, was soon upon the spot, and while Ned Hinkley was despatched to the village for assistance, he took himself the charge of recovering the unconscious maiden. Half-forgetting his hostility, William Hinkley undertook the same good service to Stevens, who really seemed to need succor much more than his fair companion. While William Hinkley busied himself by rolling, friction, fanning, and other practices, employed in such cases, to bring his patient back to life, he could not forbear an occasional glance to the spot where, at a little distance, lay the object of his affections.

Her face was toward him, as she lay upon her side. Her head was supported on the lap of the old man. Her long hair hung dishevelled, of a more glossy black now when filled with water. Her eyes were shut, and the dark fringes of their lids lay like a pencil-streak across the pale, prominent orbs which they served to bind together. The glow of indignant pride with which she was wont to receive his approaches had all disappeared in the mortal struggle for life through which she had lately gone; and pure, as seemingly free from every passion, her pale beauties appeared to his doating eye the very perfection of human loveliness. Her breast now heaved convulsively—deep sighs poured their way through her parted lips. Her eyes alternately opened upon but shut against the light, and, finally, the exertions of the old man were rewarded as the golden gleam of expression began to relight and reillumine those features which seemed never to be without it.

She recovered her consciousness, started up, made an effort to rise, but, reeling with inability, sunk down again into the paternal grasp of the old man.

“Mr. Calvert!” she murmured.

“You are safe, my daughter,” said the old man.

“But how did it happen?—where am I?”

“By the lake.”

“Ah! I remember. I was drowning. I felt it all—the choking—the struggle—the water in my ears and eyes! It was a dreadful feeling. How did I come here? Who saved me?”

“Ned Hinkley brought you to land, but he was helped by his cousin William, who assisted the stranger.”

“The stranger? ah! yes, I remember: but where is he?”

She looked around wildly and anxiously, and beholding William Hinkley at a little distance, busy with the still unconscious form of Stevens, a quick, fearful shudder passed over her frame. She almost crouched into the old man's arms as she asked, in husky accents—

"He is not dead—he lives?"

"I hope so. He breathes."

She waited for no more, but, starting to her feet, she staggered to the spot where Stevens lay. The old man would have prevented her.

"You are feeble; you will do yourself harm. Better, if you are able to walk, hurry homeward with me, when you can change your clothes."

"Would you have me ungrateful?" she exclaimed; "shall I neglect him when he risked his life for me?"

There was a consciousness in her mind that it was not all gratitude which moved her, for the deathly paleness of her cheek was now succeeded by a warm blush which denoted a yet stronger and warmer emotion. The keen eyes of William Hinkley understood the meaning of this significant but unsyllabbling mode of utterance, and his eyes spoke the reproach to hers which his lips left unsaid:—

"Ah! did I not risk my life too, to prevent—to save? When would she feel such an interest in me? when would she look thus were my life at stake?"

"He will not be neglected," said the old man, gently endeavoring to restrain her. Perhaps she would not have given much heed to the interruption, for hers was the strength of an unfettered will, one accustomed to have way, but that, at this moment, the eyes of Stevens unclosed and met her own. His consciousness had returned, and, under the increasing expression in his looks, she sunk back, and permitted the old man to lead her along the homeward path. More than once she looked back; but, with the assurance of Mr. Calvert that there was no more danger to be apprehended, she continued to advance; the worthy old man, as they went, seeking to divert her mind, by pleasant and choice anecdotes of which his memory had abundant stores, from dwelling upon the unpleasant and exciting event which had just taken place.

Margaret Cooper, whose habits previously had kept her

from much intimacy with the village sage, was insensibly taken by his gentleness, the purity of his taste, the choiceness of his expression, the extent of his resources. She wondered how a mind so full should have remained unknown to her so long—committing the error, very common to persons of strong will and determined self-esteem, of assuming that she should, as a matter of inevitable necessity, have known everything and everybody of which the knowledge is at all desirable.

In pleasant discourse he beguiled her progress, until Ned Hinkley was met returning with horses—the pathway did not admit of a vehicle, and the village had none less cumbersome than cart and wagon—on one of which she mounted, refusing all support or assistance; and when Mr. Calvert insisted upon walking beside her, she grasped the bough of a tree, broke off a switch, and, giving an arch but good-natured smile and nod to the old man, laid it smartly over the horse's flank, and in a few moments was out of sight.

"The girl is smart," said Calvert, as he followed her retreating form with his eye—"too smart! She speaks well—has evidently read. No wonder that William loves her; but she will never do for him. She has no humility. Pride is the demon in her heart. Pride will overthrow her. These woods spoil her. Solitude is the natural nurse of self-esteem, particularly where it is strong at first, and is coupled with anything like talent. Better for such a one if sickness, and strife, and suffering, had taken her at the cradle, and nursed her with the milk of self-denial, which is the only humility worth having. And yet, why should I speak of her, when the sting remains in my own soul—when I yet feel the pang of my feebleness and self-reproach? Alas! I should school none. The voice speaks to me ever, 'Old man, to thy prayers! Thy own knees are yet stubborn as thy neck!'"

Leaving him to the becoming abasement of that delusive self-comfort which ministers to our vain-glory, and which

this good old man had so happily succeeded in rebuking, we will return to the spot where we left our other parties. Ned Hinkley had already joined them. With his horse he had providently brought a suit of his own clothes for the stranger, which, though made of homespun, and not of the most modern fashion, were yet warm and comfortable, and as Stevens was compelled to think, infinitely preferable to the chilly and dripping garments which he wore. A few moments, in the cover of the woods, sufficed the neophyte to make the alteration; while the two cousins, to whom the exigencies of forester and fisherman life were more familiar, prepared to walk the water out of their own habits, by giving rapid circulation to their blood and limbs. While their preparations were in progress, however, Ned Hinkley could not deny himself the pleasure of discoursing at length on the subject of the late disaster.

"Stranger," he said, "I must tell you that you've had a souse in as fine a fishing-pond as you'll meet with from here to Salt river. I reckon, now, that while you were in, you never thought for a moment of the noble trout that inhabit it."

"I certainly did not," said the other.

"There, now! I could have sworn it. That a man should go with his eyes open into a country without ever asking what sort of folks lived there! Isn't it monstrous?"

"It certainly seems like a neglect of the first duty of a traveller," said Stevens good-humoredly; "let me not show myself heedless of another. Let me thank you, gentlemen, for saving my life. I believe I owe it to one or both of you."

"To him, not to me," said Ned Hinkley, pointing to his cousin. William was at a little distance, looking sullenly upon the two with eyes which, if dark and moody, seemed to denote a thought which was anywhere else but in the scene around him.

"He saved you, and I saved the woman. I wouldn't

have a woman drowned in this lake for all the houses in Charlemont."

"Ah! why?"

"'Twould spoil it for fishing for ever."

"Why would a woman do this more than a man?"

"For a very good reason, my friend. Because the ghost of a woman talks, and a man's don't, they say. The ghost of a man says what it wants to say with its eyes; a woman's with her tongue. You know there's nothing scares fish so much as one's talking."

"I have heard so. But is it so clear that there is such a difference between ghosts? How is it known that the female does all the talking?"

"Oh, that's beyond dispute. There's a case that we all know about—all here in Charlemont—the case of Joe Barney's millpond. Barney lost one of his children and one of his negroes in the pond—drowned as a judgment, they say, for fishing a Sunday. That didn't make any difference with the fish: you could catch them there just the same as before. But when old Mrs. Frey fell in, crossing the dam, the case was altered. You might sit there for hours and days, night and day, and bob till you were weary; devil a bite after that! Now, what could make the difference but the tongue? Mother Frey had a tongue of her own, I tell you. 'Twas going when she fell in, and I reckon's been going ever since. She was a sulphury, spiteful body, to be sure, and some said she poisoned the fish if she didn't scare them. To my thinking, 'twas the tongue."

Stevens had been something seduced from his gravity by the blunt humor and unexpected manner of Ned Hinkley; besides, having been served, if not saved, by his hands, something, perhaps, of attention was due to what he had to say; but he recollected the assumed character which he had to maintain—something doubtful, too, if he had not already impaired it in the sight and hearing of those who had come so opportunely but so unexpectedly to his relief.

He recovered his composure and dignity ; forbore to smile at the story which might otherwise have provoked not only smile but corresponding answer ; and, by the sudden coolness of his manner, tended to confirm in Ned Hinkley's bosom the half-formed hostility which the cause of his cousin had originally taught him to feel.

"I'll lick the conceit out of him yet!" he muttered, as Stevens, turning away, ascended to the spot where William Hinkley stood.

"I owe you thanks, Mr. Hinkley," he began.

The young man interrupted him.

"You owe me nothing, sir," he answered hastily, and prepared to turn away.

"You have saved my life, sir."

"I should have saved your dog's life, sir, in the same situation. I have done but an act of duty."

"But, Mr. Hinkley—"

"Your horse is ready for you, sir," said the young man, turning off abruptly, and darting up the sides of the hill, remote from the pathway, and burying himself in the contiguous forests.

"Strange!" exclaimed the neophyte — "this is very strange!"

"Not so strange, stranger, as that I should stand your groom, without being brought up to such a business for any man. Here's your nag, sir."

"I thank you—I would not willingly trespass," he replied, as he relieved our angler from his grasp upon the bridle.

"You're welcome without the thanks, stranger. I reckon you know the route you come. Up hill, follow the track to the top, take the left turn to the valley, then you'll see the houses, and can follow your own nose or your nag's Either's straight enough to carry you to his rack. You'll find your clothes at your boarding-house about the time that you'll get there."

"Nay, sir, I already owe you much. Let them not trouble you. I will take them myself."

"No, no, stranger!" was the reply of our fisherman, as he stooped down and busied himself in making the garments into a compact bundle; "I'm not the man to leave off without doing the thing I begin to do. I sometimes do more than I bargain for—sometimes lick a man soundly when I set out only to tweak his nose; but I make it a sort of Christian law never to do less. You may reckon to find your clothes home by the time you get there. There's your road."

"A regular pair of cubs!" muttered the horseman, as he ascended the hill.

"To purse up his mouth as if I was giving him root-drink, when I was telling him about Mother Frey's spoiling the fish! Let him take care—he may get the vinegar next time, and not the fish!"

And, with these characteristic commentaries, the parties separated for the time.

CHAPTER XVII.

PHILOSOPHY OF FIGHTING.

“YOU'RE not a fighter, Bill Hinkley, and that's about the worst fault that I can find against you.”

Such was the beginning of a dialogue between the cousins some three days after the affair which was narrated in our last chapter. The two young men were at the house of the speaker, or rather at his mother's house; where, a favorite and only son, he had almost supreme dominion. He was putting his violin in tune, and the sentences were spoken at intervals with the discordant scraps of sound which were necessarily elicited by this unavoidable musical operation. These sounds might be said to form a running accompaniment for the dialogue, and, considering the sombre mood of the person addressed, they were, perhaps, far more congenial than any more euphonious strains would have been.

“Not a fighter!” said the other; “why, what do you mean?”

“Why, just what I say—you are not a fighter. You love reading, and fiddling, and fishing sometimes, and sometimes dancing, and hunting, and swimming; but I'm pretty certain you don't love fighting. You needn't contradict, Bill—I've been thinking the matter over; and I'm sure of it. I recollect every battle or scrape you ever were in, from the time we went to old Chandler's, and I tell you, you're not a fighter—you don't love fighting!”

This was concluded with a tremendous scrape over the strings, which seemed to say as well as scrape could speak—"There can be no mistake on the subject—I've said it."

"If I knew exactly what you were driving at," said the other, "perhaps I might answer you. I never pretended to be a fighter; and as for loving it, as I love eating, drinking, books, fiddling, and dancing, why that needs no answer. Of course I do not, and I don't know who does."

"There it is. I told you. I knew it. You'd sooner do almost anything than fight."

"If you mean that I would submit to insult," said the more peaceable cousin, with some displeasure in his tones and countenance, "sooner than resent it, you are very much mistaken. It wouldn't be advisable even for you to try the experiment."

"Poh, poh, Bill, you know for that matter that it wouldn't take much trying. I'd lick you as easily now as I did when we were boys together."

"We are boys no longer," said the other gravely.

"I'm as much a boy as ever, so far as the licking capacity calls for boyhood. I've pretty much the same spirit now that I had then, and ten times the same strength and activity. But don't look so blue. I'm not going to try my strength and spirit and activity on you. And don't suppose, Bill Hinkley, that I mean to say you're anything of a coward, or that you'd submit to any open insult; but still I do say, you're not only not fond of fighting, but you're just not as much inclined that way as you should be."

"Indeed! what more would you have? Do you not say that I would not submit to insult?—that I show the proper degree of courage in such cases?"

"Not the *proper* degree. That's the very question. You're not quick enough. You wait for the first blow. You don't step out to meet the enemy. You look for him to come to you."

"Surely ! I look upon fighting as brutal—to be waited for, not sought—to be resorted to only in compliance with necessity—to be avoided to the last !"

"No such thing—all a mistake. Fighting and the desire to get on the shoulders of our neighbors is a natural passion. We see that every day. The biggest boy licks the one just below him, he whips the next, and so down, and there's not one that don't lick somebody and don't stand licked himself—for the master licks the biggest. The desire to fight and flog is natural, and this being the case, it stands to reason that we must lick our neighbor or he'll be sure to lick us."

"Pshaw ! you speak like a boy yet. This is schoolhouse philosophy."

"And very good philosophy too. I'm thinking the schoolhouse and the play-ground is pretty much a sort of world to itself. It's no bad show of what the world without is ; and one of its first lessons and that which I think the truest, is the necessity of having a trial of strength with every new-comer ; until we learn where he's to stand in the ranks, number one or number nothing. You see there just the same passions, though, perhaps, on a small scale, that we afterward find to act upon the big world of manhood. There, we fight for gingerbread, for marbles, top and ball ; not unfrequently because we venture to look at our neighbor's sweetheart ; and sometimes, quite as often, for the love of the thing and to know where the spirit and the sinew are. Well, isn't that just what the big world does after us ? As men, we fight for bigger play-things, for pounds, where before we fought for pence—for gold where before we fought for coppers—for command of a country instead of a schoolyard ; for our wives instead of sweethearts, and through sheer deviltry and the love of the thing, when there's nothing else to fight about, just the same as we did in boyhood."

"But even were you to prove, and I to admit, that it is

so, just as you say, that would not prove the practice to be a jot more proper, or a jot less brutal."

"Begging your pardon, Bill, it proves it to be right and proper, and accordingly, if brutal, a becoming brutality. If this is the natural disposition of boys and men, don't you see that this schoolboy licking and fighting is a necessary part of one's moral education? It learns one to use his strength, his limbs and sinews, as he may be compelled to use them, in self-defence, in every future day of his life. You know very well what follows a boy at school who doesn't show himself ready to bung up his neighbor's eye the moment he sees it at a cross-twinkle. He gets his own bunged up. Well, it's just the same thing when he gets to be a man. If you have a dispute with your enemy, I don't say that you shouldn't reason with him, but I do say that your reasoning will have very little effect upon him unless he sees that you are able and willing to write it in black and blue upon his sheepskin. And what better way could you find to show him *that*, unless by giving him word and blow, the blow first, as being the most impressive argument?"

"You must have been dreaming of these subjects last night," said the grave cousin—"you seem to have them unusually well cut and dried."

"I haven't been dreaming about it, Bill, but I confess I've been thinking about it very seriously all night, and considering all the arguments that I thought you would make use of against it. I haven't quite done with my discussion, which I took up entirely for your benefit."

"Indeed! you are quite philanthropic before breakfast; but let us hear you?"

"You talk of the brutality of fighting—now in what does that brutality consist? Is it not in breaking noses, kicking shins, bunging up eyes, and making one's neighbor feel uncomfortable in thigh, and back, and arms, and

face, and skin, and indeed, everywhere, where a big fist or a cowhide shoe may plant a buffet or a bruise?"

"Quite a definition, Ned."

"I'm glad you think so: for if it's brutal in the boy to do so to his schoolmate, is it less so for the schoolmaster to do the same thing to the boy that's under his charge? He bruises my skin, makes my thighs, and arms, and back, and legs, and face, and hands, ache, and if my definition be a correct one, he is quite as brutal as the boys who do the same thing to one another."

"He does it because the boys deserve it, and in order to make them obedient and active."

"And when did a boy not deserve a flogging when he gets licked by his companion?" demanded the other triumphantly—"and don't the licking make him obedient, and don't the kicking make him active? By gemini, I've seen more activity from one chap's legs under the quick application of another's feet, than I think anything else could produce, unless it were feet made expressly for such a purpose and worked by a steam-engine. That might make them move something faster, but I reckon there would be no need in such a case of any such improvement."

"What are you driving at, Ned Hinkley? This is by far the longest argument, I think, that you've ever undertaken. You must be moved by some very serious considerations."

"I am, and you'll see what I'm driving at after a little while. I'm not fond of arguing, you know, but I look upon the fighting principle as a matter to be known and believed in, and I wish to make clear to you my reasons for believing in it myself. You don't suppose I'd put down the fiddle for a talk at any time if the subject was not a serious one?"

"Give way—you have the line."

"About the brutality of fighting then, there's another

thing to be said. Fighting produces good feeling — that is to say supposing one party fairly to have licked another.”

“Indeed — that’s new.”

“And true too, Bill Hinkley. It cures the sulks. It lets off steam. It’s like a thunderstorm that comes once in a while, and drives away the clouds, and clears the skies until all’s blue again.”

“Black and blue.”

“No! what was black becomes blue. Chaps that have been growling at each other for weeks and months lose their bad blood—”

“From the nostrils!”

“Yes, from the nostrils. It’s a sort of natural channel, and runs freely from that quarter. The one crows and the other runs and there’s an end of the scrape and the sulks. The weaker chap, feeling his weakness, ceases to be impudent; the stronger, having his power acknowledged, becomes the protector of the weak. Each party falls into his place, and so far from the licking producing bad feeling it produces good feeling and good humor; and I conclude that one half of the trouble in the world, the squabbles between man and man, woman and woman, boy and boy — nay, between rival nations — is simply because your false and foolish notions of brutality and philanthropy keep them from coming to the scratch as soon as they should. They hang off, growling and grumbling, and blackguarding, and blaspheming, when, if they would only take hold, and come to an earnest grapple, the odds would soon show themselves — broken heads and noses would follow — the bad blood would run, and as soon as each party found his level, the one being finally on his back, peace would ensue, and there would be good humor for ever after, or at least until the blood thickened again. I think there’s reason in my notion. I was thinking it over half the night. I’ve thought of it oftentimes before. I’ve never yet seen the argument that’s strong enough to tumble it.”

"Your views are certainly novel, Ned, if not sound. You will excuse me if I do not undertake to dispute them this morning. I give in, therefore, and you may congratulate yourself upon having gained a triumph if not a convert?"

"Stop, stop, William Hinkley: you don't suppose I've done all this talking only to make a convert or to gain a triumph?"

"Why, that's your object in fighting, why not in arguing?"

"Well, that's the object of most persons when they dispute, I know; but it is not mine. I wish to make a practical application of my doctrine."

"Indeed! who do you mean to fight now?"

"It's not for me to fight, it's for you."

"Me!"

"Yes; you have the preference by rights, though if you don't — and I'm rather sorry to think, as I told you at the start, that the only fault I had to find with you is that you're not a fighter — I must take your place and settle the difference."

William Hinkley turned upon the speaker. The latter had laid down the violin, having, in the course of the argument, broken all its strings; and he stood now, unjacketed, and still in the chamber, where the two young men had been sleeping, almost in the attitude of one about to grapple with an antagonist. The serious face of him whose voice had been for war — his startling position — the unwonted eagerness of his eye, and the ludicrous importance which he attached to the strange principle which he had been asserting — conquered for a moment the graver mood of his love-sick companion, and he laughed outright at his pugnacious cousin. The latter seemed a little offended.

"It's well you can laugh at such things, Bill Hinkley, but I can't. There was a time when every mother's son in Kentucky was a man, and could stand up to his rack

with the best. If he couldn't keep the top place, he went a peg lower; but he made out to keep the place for which he was intended. Then, if a man disliked his neighbor he crossed over to him and said so, and they went at it like men, and as soon as the pout was over they shook hands, and stood side by side, and shoulder to shoulder, like true friends, in every danger, and never did fellows fight better against Indians and British than the same two men, that had lapped muscles, and rolled in the grain together till you couldn't say whose was whose, and which was which, till the best man jumped up, and shook himself, and gave the word to crow. After that it was all peace and good humor, and they drank and danced together, and it didn't lessen a man in his sweetheart's eyes, though he was licked, if he could say he had stood up like a man, and was downed after a good hug, because he couldn't help it. Now, there's precious little of that. The chap that dislikes his fellow, hasn't the soul to say it out, but he goes aside and sneers and snickers, and he whispers things that breed slanders, and scandals, and bad blood, until there's no trusting anybody; and everything is full of hate and enmity — but then it's so peaceful! Peaceful, indeed! as if there was any peace where there is no confidence, and no love, and no good feeling either for one thing or another."

"Really, Ned, it seems to me you're indignant without any occasion. I am tempted to laugh at you again."

"No, don't. You'd better not."

"Ha! ha! ha! I can not help it, Ned; so don't buffet me. You forced me into many a fight when I was a boy, for which I had no stomach; I trust you will not pummel me yourself because the world has grown so hatefully pacific. Tell me, in plain terms, who I am to fight now."

"Who! who but Stevens? — this fellow Stevens. He's your enemy, you say — comes between you and your sweetheart — between you and your own mother — seems to look down upon you — speaks to you as if he was wiser, and

better, and superior in every way — makes you sad and sulky to your best friends — you growl and grumble at him — you hate him — you fear him—”

“Fear him!”

“Yes, yes, I say fear him, for it’s a sort of fear to skulk off from your mother’s house to avoid seeing him—”

“What, Ned, do you tell me that — do you begrudge me a place with you here, my bed, my breakfast?”

“Begrudge! dang it, William Hinkley, don’t tell me that, unless you want me to lay heavy hand on your shoulder!” — and the tears gushed into the rough fellow’s eyes as he spoke these words, and he turned off to conceal them.

“I don’t mean to vex you, Ned, but why tell me that I skulk — that I fear this man?”

“Begrudge!” muttered the other.

“Nay, forgive me; I didn’t mean it. I was hasty when I said so; but you also said things to provoke me. Do you suppose that I fear this man Stevens?”

“Why don’t you lick him then, or let him lick you, and bring the matter to an ending? Find out who’s the best man, and put an end to the growling and the groaning. As it now stands you’re not the same person — you’re not fit company for any man. You scarcely talk, you listen to nobody. You won’t fish, you won’t hunt: you’re sulky yourself and you make other people so!”

“I’m afraid, Ned, it wouldn’t much help the matter even if I were to chastise the stranger.”

“It would cure him of his impudence. It would make him know how to treat you; and if the rest of your grievance comes from Margaret Cooper, there’s a way to end that too.”

“How! you wouldn’t have me fight her?” said William Hinkley, with an effort to smile.

“Why, we may call it fighting,” said the advocate for such wholesale pugnacity, “since it calls for quite as much courage sometimes to face one woman as it does to face

three men. But what I mean that you should do with her is to up and at her. Put the downright question like a man, 'will you?' or 'won't you?' and no more beating about the bush. If she says 'no!' there's no more to be said, and if I was you after that, I'd let Stevens have her or the d—l himself, since I'm of the notion that no woman is fit for me if she thinks me not fit for her. Such a woman can't be worth having, and after that I wouldn't take her as a gracious gift were she to be made twice as beautiful. The track's before you, William Hinkley. Bring the stranger to the hug, and Margaret Cooper too, if she'll let you. But, at all events, get over the grunting and the growling, the sulky looks, and the sour moods. They don't become a man who's got a man's heart, and the sinews of a man."

William Hinkley leaned against the fireplace with his head resting upon his hand. The other approached him.

"I don't mean to say anything, Bill, or even to look anything, that'll do you hurt. I'm for bringing your trouble to a short cut. I've told you what I think right and reasonable, and for no other man in Kentucky would I have taken the pains to think out this matter as I have done. But you or I must lick Stevens."

"You forget, Ned. Your eagerness carries you astray. Would you beat a man who offers no resistance?"

"Surely not."

"Stevens is a non-combatant. If you were to slap John Cross on one cheek he'd turn you the other. He'd never strike you back."

"John Cross and Stevens are two persons. I tell you the stranger *will* fight. I'm sure of it. I've seen it in his looks and actions."

"Do you think so?"

"I do; I'm sure of it. But you must recollect besides, that John Cross is a preacher, already sworn in, as I may say. Stevens is only a beginner. Besides, John Cross is an old man; Stevens, a young one. John Cross don't care

a straw about all the pretty girls in the country. He works in the business of souls, not beauties, and it's very clear that Stevens not only loves a pretty girl, but that he's over head and heels in love with your Margaret——"

"Say no more. If he will fight, Ned Hinkley, he shall fight!"

"Bravo, Bill—that's all that I was arguing for—that's all that I want. But you must make at Margaret Cooper also."

"Ah! Ned, there I confess my fears."

"Why, what are you afraid of?"

"Rejection!"

"Is that worse than this suspense—this anxiety—this looking out from morning till night for the sunshine, and this constant apprehension of the clouds—this knowing not what to be about—this sulking—this sadding—this growling—this grunting—this muling—this moping—this eternal vinegar-face and ditchwater-spirit?"

"I don't know, Ned, but I confess my weakness—my want of courage in this respect!"

"Psho! the bark's worse always than the bite. The fear worse than the danger! Suspense is the very d—l! Did you ever hear of the Scotch parson's charity? He prayed that God might suspend Napoleon over the very jaws of hell—but 'Oh, Lord!' said he, 'dinna let him fa' in!' To my mind, mortal lips never uttered a more malignant prayer!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

TRAILING THE FOX.

THIS dialogue was broken by a summons to the breakfast-table. We have already intimated that while the hateful person of Stevens was an inmate of his own house, William Hinkley remained, the better portion of his time, at that of his cousin. It was not merely that Stevens was hateful to his sight, but such was the devotion of his father and mother to that adventurer, that the young man passed with little notice from either, or if he incurred their attention at all, it was only to receive their rebuke. He had not been able to disguise from them his dislike to Stevens. This dislike showed itself in many ways—in coldness, distance, silence—a reluctance to accord the necessary civilities, and in very unequivocal glances of hostility from the eyes of the jealous young villager.

Such offences against good-breeding were considered by them as so many offences against God himself, shown to one who was about to profess his ministry; and being prepared to see in Brother Stevens an object of worth and veneration only, they lacked necessarily all that keenness of discrimination which might have helped somewhat to qualify the improprieties of which they believed their son to be guilty. Of his causes of jealousy they had no suspicion, and they shared none of his antipathies. He was subject to the daily lecture from the old man, and the nightly exhortation and expostulation of the old woman

The latter did her spiriting gently. The former roared and thundered. The mother implored and kissed—the father denounced and threatened. The one, amidst the faults of her son which she reproved, could see his virtues ; she could also see that he was suffering—she knew not why—as well as sinning ; the other could only see an insolent, disobedient boy who was taking airs upon himself, flying in the face of his parents, and doomed to perish like the sons of Eli, unless by proving himself a better manager than Eli, he addressed himself in time to the breaking in of the unruly spirit whose offences promised to be so heinous. It was not merely from the hateful sight of his rival, or the monotonous expostulation of his mother, that the poor youth fled ; it was sometimes to escape the heavily chastening hand of his bigoted father.

These things worked keenly and constantly in the mind of William Hinkley. They acquired additional powers of ferment from the coldness of Margaret Cooper, and from the goadings of his cousin. Naturally one of the gentlest of creatures, the young man was not deficient in spirit. What seemed to his more rude and elastic relative a token of imbecility, was nothing more than the softening influence of his reflective and mental over his physical powers. These, under the excitement of his blood were necessarily made subject to his animal impulses, and when he left the house that morning, with his Blackstone under his arm, on his way to the peaceful cottage of old Calvert, where he pursued his studies, his mind was in a perfect state of chaos. Of the chapter which he had striven to compass the previous night, in which the rights of persons are discussed with the usual clearness of style, but the usual one-sidedness of judgment of that smooth old monarchist, William Hinkley scarcely remembered a solitary syllable. He had read only with his eyes. His mind had kept no pace with his proceedings, and though he strove as he went along to recall the heads of topics, the points and principles of what

he had been reading, his efforts at reflection, by insensible but sudden transitions, invariably concluded with some image of strife and commotion, in which he was one of the parties and Alfred Stevens another; the beautiful, proud face of Margaret Cooper being always unaccountably present, and seeming to countenance, with its scornful smiles, the spirit of strife which operated upon the combatants.

This mood had the most decided effect upon his appearance; and the good old man, Calvert, whose attention had been already drawn to the condition of distress and suffering which he manifested, was now more than ever struck with the seemingly sudden increase of this expression upon his face. It was Saturday — the saturnalia of schoolboys — and a day of rest to the venerable teacher. He was seated before his door, under the shadows of his paternal oak, once more forgetting the baffled aims and profitless toils of his own youthful ambition, in the fascinating pages of that historical romancer the stout Abbé Vertôt. But a glance at the youth soon withdrew his mind from this contemplation, and the sombre pages of the present opened upon his eye, and the doubtful ones of the future became, on the instant, those which he most desired to peruse.

The study of the young is always a study of the past with the old. They seem, in such a contemplation, to live over the records of memory. They feel as one just returning from a long and weary journey, who encounters another, freshly starting to traverse the same weary but inviting track. Something in the character of William Hinkley, which seemed to resemble his own, made this feeling yet more active in the mind of Mr. Calvert; and his earnest desire was to help the youth forward on the path which, he soon perceived, it was destined that the other should finally take. He was not satisfied with the indecision of character which the youth displayed. But how could he blame it harshly? It was in this very respect that his own character had failed, and though he felt that all his counsels

were to be addressed to this point, yet he knew not where, or in what manner, to begin. The volume of Blackstone which the youth carried suggested to him a course, however. He bade the young man bring out a chair, and taking the book in his hand, he proceeded to examine him upon parts of the volume which he professed to have been reading.

This examination, as it had the effect of compelling the mind of the student to contract itself to a single subject of thought, necessarily had the further effect of clearing it somewhat from the chaos of clouds which had been brooding over it, obscuring the light, and defeating the warmth of the intellectual sun behind them ; and if the examination proved the youth to have been very little of a student, or one who had been reading with a vacant mind, it also proved that the original powers of his intellect were vigorous and various—that he had an analytical capacity of considerable compass ; was bold in opinion, ingenious in solution, and with a tendency to metaphysical speculation, which, modified by the active wants and duties of a large city-practice, would have made him a subtle lawyer, and a very logical debater. But the blush kept heightening on the youth's cheeks as the examination proceeded. He had answered, but he felt all the while how much his answer had sprung from his own conjectures and how little from his authorities. The examination convinced him that the book had been so much waste-paper under his thumb. When it was ended the old man closed the volume, laid it on the sward beside him, and looked, with a mingled expression of interest and commiseration, on his face. William Hinkley noted this expression, and spoke, with a degree of mortification in look and accent, which he did not attempt to hide:—

“I am afraid, sir, you will make nothing of me. I can make nothing of myself. I am almost inclined to give up in despair. I will be nothing—I can be nothing. I feared

as much from the beginning, sir. You only waste your time on me."

"You speak too fast, William—you let your blood mingle too much with your thoughts. Let me ask you one question. How long will you be content to live as you do now—seeking nothing,—performing nothing—being nothing?"

The youth was silent.

"I, you see, am nothing," continued the old man—"nay, do not interrupt me. You will tell me, as you have already told me, that I am much, and have done much, here in Charlemont. But, for all that I am, and have done here, I need not have gone beyond my accidence. My time has been wasted; my labors, considered as means to ends, were unnecessary; I have toiled without the expected profits of toil; I have drawn water in a sieve. It is not pleasant for me to recall these things, much less to speak of them; but it is for your good that I told you my story. You have, as I had, certain defects of character—not the same exactly, but of the same family complexion. To be something, you must be resolved. You must devote yourself, heart and mind, with all your soul and with all your strength, to the business you have undertaken. Shut your windows against the sunshine, your ears to the song of birds, your heart against the fascinations of beauty; and if you never think of the last until you are thirty, you will be then a better judge of beauty, a truer lover, a better husband, a more certain candidate for happiness. Let me assure you that, of the hundred men that take wives before they are thirty, there is scarcely one who, in his secret soul, does not repent it—scarcely one who does not look back with yearning to the days when he was free."

There was a pause. The young man became very much agitated. He rose from his chair, walked apart for a few moments, and then, returning, resumed his seat by the old man.

"I believe you are right, sir—nay, I know you are; but I can not be at once—I can not promise—to be all that you wish. If Margaret Cooper would consent, I would marry her to-morrow."

The old man shook his head, but remained silent. The young one proceeded:—

"One thing I will say, however: I will take to my studies after this week, whatever befalls, with the hearty resolution which you recommend. I will try to shut out the sunshine and the song. I will endeavor to devote soul and strength, and heart and mind, to the task before me. I *know* that I can master these studies—I think I can"—he continued, more modestly, modifying the positive assertion—"and I know that it is equally my interest and duty to do so. I thank you sir, very much for what you have told me. Believe me, it has not fallen upon heedless or disrespectful ears."

The old man pressed his hand.

"I know *that*, my son, and I rejoice to think that, having given me these assurances, you will strive hard to make them good."

"I will, sir!" replied William, taking up his cap to depart.

"But whither are you going now?"

The youth blushed as he replied frankly:—

"To the widow Cooper's. I'm going to see Margaret."

"Well, well!" said the old man, as the youth disappeared, "if it must be done, the sooner it's over the better. But there's another moth to the flame. Fortunately, he will be singed only; but she!—what is left for her—so proud, yet so confiding—so confident of strength, yet so artless? But it is useless to look beyond, and very dismal."

And the speaker once more took up Vertôt, and was soon lost amid the glories of the knights of St. John. His stud-

ies were interrupted by the sudden and boisterous salutation of Ned Hinkley:—

“Well, gran’pa, hard at the big book as usual? No end to the fun of fighting, eh? I confess, if ever I get to love reading, it’ll be in some such book as that. But reading’s not natural to me, though you made me do enough of it while you had me. Bill was the boy for the books, and I for the hooks. By-the-way, talking of hooks, how did those trout eat? Fine, eh? I haven’t seen you since the day of our ducking.”

“No, Ned, and I’ve been looking for you. Where have you been?”

“Working, working! Everything’s been going wrong. Lines snapped, fiddle-strings cracked, hooks missing, gun rusty, and Bill Hinkley so sulky, that his frown made a shadow on the wall as large and ugly as a buffalo’s. But where is he? I came to find him here.”

While he was speaking, the lively youth squatted down, and deliberately took his seat on the favorite volume which Mr. Calvert had laid upon the sward at his approach.

“Take the chair, Ned,” said the old man, with a smaller degree of kindness in his tone than was habitual with him. “Take the chair. Books are sacred things—to be worshipped and studied, not employed as footstools.”

“Why, what’s the hurt, gran’pa?” demanded the young man, though he rose and did as he was bidden. “If ’twas a fiddle, now, there would be some danger of a crash, but a big book like that seems naturally made to sit upon.”

The old man answered him mildly:—

“I have learned to venerate books, Ned, and can no more bear to see them abused than I could bear to be abused myself. It seems to me like treating their writers and their subjects with scorn. If you were to contemplate the venerable heads of the old knights with my eyes and feelings, you would see why I wish to guard them from everything like disrespect.”

"Well, I beg their pardon—a thousand pardons! I meant no offence, gran'pa—and can't help thinking that it's all a notion of yours, your reverencing such old Turks and Spaniards that have been dead a thousand years. They were very good people, no doubt, but I'm thinking they've served their turn; and I see no more harm in squatting upon their histories than in walking over their graves, which, if I were in their country of Jericho—that was where they lived, gran'pa, wa'n't it?—I should be very apt to do without asking leave, I tell you."

Ned Hinkley purposely perverted his geography and history. There was a spice of mischief in his composition, and he grinned good-naturedly as he watched the increasing gravity upon the old man's face.

"Come, come, gran'pa, don't be angry. You know my fun is a sort of fizz—there's nothing but a flash—nothing to hurt—no shotting. But where's Bill Hinkley, gran'pa?"

"Gone to the widow Cooper's, to see Margaret."

"Ah! well, I'm glad he's made a beginning. But I'd much rather he'd have seen the other first."

"What other do you mean?" demanded the old man; but the speaker, though sufficiently random and reckless in what he said, saw the impolicy of allowing the purpose of his cousin in regard to Stevens to be understood. He contrived to throw the inquirer off.

"Gran'pa, do you know there's something in this fellow Stevens that don't altogether please me? I'm not satisfied with him."

"Ah, indeed! what do you see to find fault with?"

"Well, you see, he comes here pretending to study. Now, in the first place, why should he come here to study? why didn't he stay at home with his friends and parents?"

"Perhaps he had neither. Perhaps he had no home. You might as well ask me why I came here, and settled down, where I was not born—where I had neither friends nor parents."

"Oh, no, but you told us why," said the other. "You gave us a reason for what you did."

"And why may not the stranger give a reason too?"

"He don't, though."

"Perhaps he will when you get intimate with him. I see nothing in this to be dissatisfied with. I had not thought you so suspicious, Ned Hinkley—so little charitable."

"Charity begins at home, gran'pa. But there's more in this matter. This man comes here to study to be a parson. How does he study? Can you guess?"

"I really can not."

"By dressing spruce as a buck—curling his hair backward over his ears something like a girl's, and going out, morning, noon, and night, to see Margaret Cooper."

"As there is no good reason to suppose that a student of divinity is entirely without the affections of humanity, I still see nothing inconsistent with his profession in this conduct."

"But how can he study?"

"Ah! it may be inconsistent with his studies though not with his profession. It is human without being altogether proper. You see that your cousin neglects his studies in the same manner. I presume that the stranger also loves Miss Cooper."

"But he has no such right as Bill Hinkley."

"Why not?"

"Why not? Why, Bill is a native here, has been loving her for the last year or more. His right certainly ought to be much greater than that of a man whom nobody knows—who may be the man in the moon for anything we know to the contrary—just dropped in upon us, nobody knows how, to do nobody knows what."

"All that may be very true, Ned, and yet his right to seek Miss Cooper may be just as good as that of yourself or mine. You forget that it all depends upon the young

lady herself whether either of them is to have a right at all in her concerns."

"Well, that's a subject we needn't dispute about, gran'pa, when there's other things. Now, isn't it strange that this stranger should ride off once a week with his valise on his saddle, just as if he was starting on a journey—should be gone half a day—then come back with his nag all in a foam, and after that you should see him in some new cravat, or waistcoat, or pantaloons, just as if he had gone home and got a change?"

"And does he do that?" inquired Mr. Calvert, with some show of curiosity.

"That he does, and he always takes the same direction; and it seems—so Aunt Sarah herself says, though she thinks him a small sort of divinity on earth—that the day before, he's busy writing letters, and, according to her account, pretty long letters too. Well, nobody sees that he ever gets any letters in return. He never asks at the post-office, so Jacob Zandts himself tells me, and that's strange enough, too, if so be he has any friends or relations anywhere else."

Mr. Calvert listened with interest to these and other particulars which his young companion had gathered respecting the habits of the stranger; and he concurred with his informant in the opinion that there was something in his proceedings which was curious and perhaps mysterious. Still, he did not think it advisable to encourage the prying and suspicious disposition of the youth, and spoke to this effect in the reply which finally dismissed the subject. Ned Hinkley was silenced not satisfied.

"There's something wrong about it," he muttered to himself on leaving the old man, "and, by dickens! I'll get to the bottom of it, or there's no taste in Salt-river. The fellow's a rascal; I feel it if I don't know it, and if Bill Hinkley don't pay him off, I must. One or t'other must do it, that's certain."

With these reflections, which seemed to him to be no less moral than social, the young man took his way back to the village, laboring with all the incoherence of unaccustomed thought, to strike out some process by which to find a solution for those mysteries which were supposed to characterize the conduct of the stranger. He had just turned out of the gorge leading from Calvert's house into the settlement, when he encountered the person to whom his meditations were given, on horseback, and going at a moderate gallop along the high-road to the country. Stevens bowed to him and drew up for speech as he drew nigh. At first Ned Hinkley appeared disposed to avoid him, but moved by a sudden notion, he stopped and suffered himself to speak with something more of civility than he had hitherto shown to the same suspected personage.

"Why, you're not going to travel, Parson Stevens," said he—"you're not going to leave us, are you?"

"No, sir—I only wish to give myself and horse a stretch of a few miles for the sake of health. Too much stable, they say, makes a saucy nag."

"So it does, and I may say, a saucy man too. But seeing you with your valise, I thought you were off for good."

Stevens said something about his being so accustomed to ride with the valise that he carried it without thinking.

"I scarcely knew I had it on!"

"That's a lie all round," said Ned Hinkley to himself as the other rode off. "Now, if I was mounted, I'd ride after him and see where he goes and what he's after. What's to hinder? It's but a step to the stable, and but five minutes to the saddle. Dang it, but I'll take trail this time if I never did before."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DOOM.

WITH this determination our suspicious youth made rapid progress in getting out his horse. A few minutes saw him mounted, and putting some of his resolution into his heels, he sent the animal forward at a killing start, under the keen infliction of the spur. He had marked with his eye the general course which Stevens had taken up the hills, and having a nag of equal speed and bottom, did not scruple, in the great desire which he felt, to ascertain the secret of the stranger, to make him display the qualities of both from the very jump. Stevens had been riding with a free rein, but in consequence of these energetic measures on the part of Hinkley, the latter soon succeeded in overhauling him. Still he had already gone a space of five miles, and this, too, in one direction. He looked back when he found himself pursued, and his countenance very clearly expressed the chagrin which he felt. This he strove, but with very indifferent success, to hide from the keen searching eyes of his pursuer. He drew up to wait his coming, and there was a dash of bitterness in his tones as he expressed his "gratification at finding a companion where he least expected one."

"And perhaps, parson, when you didn't altogether wish for one," was the reply of the reckless fellow. "The truth is, I know I'm not the sort of company that a wise, sensible, learned, and pious young gentleman would like to

keep, but the truth is what you said about taking a stretch, man and beast, seemed to me to be just about as wise a thing for me and my beast also. We've been lying by so long that I was getting a little stiff in my joints, and Flip-flap, my nag here, was getting stiff in his neck, as they say was the case with the Jews in old times, so I took your idea and put after you, thinking that you'd agree with me that bad company's far better than none."

There was a mixture of simplicity and archness in the manner of the speaker that put Stevens somewhat at fault; but he saw that it wouldn't do to show the dudgeon which he really felt; and smoothing his quills with as little obvious effort as possible, he expressed his pleasure at the coming of his companion. While doing so, he wheeled his horse about, and signified a determination to return.

What! so soon? Why, Lord bless you, Flipflap has scarcely got in motion yet. If such a stir will do for your nag 'twont do for him."

But Stevens doggedly kept his horse's head along the back track, though the animal himself exhibited no small restiffness and a disposition to go forward.

"Well, really, Parson Stevens, I take it as unkind that you turn back almost the very moment I join you. I seem to have scared ride out of you if not out of your creature; but do as you please. I'll ride on, now I'm out. I don't want to force myself on any man for company."

Stevens disclaimed any feeling of this sort, but declared he had ridden quite as far as he intended; and while he hesitated, Hinkley cut the matter short by putting spurs to his steed, and going out of sight in a moment.

"What can the cur mean?" demanded Stevens of himself, the moment after they had separated. "Can he have any suspicions? Ha! I must be watchful! At all events, there's no going forward to-day. I must put it off for next week; and meanwhile have all my eyes about me. The fellow seems to have as much cunning as simplicity. He

is disposed too, to be insolent. I marked his manner at the lake, as well as that of his bull-headed cousin; but that sousing put anger out of me, and then, again, 'twill scarcely do in these good days for such holy men as myself to take up cudgels. I must bear it for awhile as quietly as possible. It will not be long. She at least is suspicionless. Never did creature so happily delude herself. Yet what a judgment in some things! What keen discrimination! What a wild, governless imagination! She would be a prize, if it were only to exhibit. How she would startle the dull, insipid, tea-table simperers on our Helicon—nay, with what scorn she would traverse the Helicon itself. The devil is that she would have a will in spite of her keeper. Such an animal is never tamed. There could be no prescribing to her the time when she should roar—no teaching her to fawn and fondle, and not to rend. Soul, and eye, and tongue, would speak under the one impulse, in the exciting moment; and when Mrs. Singalongohnay was squeaking out her eternal requiems—her new versions of the Psalms and Scriptures—her blank verse elegiacs—oh! how blank!—beginning, 'Night was upon the hills,'—or, 'The evening veil hung low,' or, 'It slept,'—or after some other equally threatening form and fashion—I can fancy how the bright eye of Margaret would gleam with scorn; and while the Pollies and Dollies, the Patties and Jennies, the Corydons and Jemmy Jesamies, all round were throwing up hands and eyes in a sort of rapture, how she would look, with what equal surprise and contempt, doubting her own ears, and sickening at the stuff and the strange sycophancy which induced it. And should good old Singalongohnay, with a natural and patronizing visage, approach, and venture to talk to her about poetry, with that assured smile of self-excellence which such a venerable authority naturally employs, how she would turn upon the dame and exclaim—'What! do you call that poetry?' What a concussion would follow. How the simperers would sheer off;

the tea that night might as well be made of aqua-fortis. Ha! ha! I can fancy the scene before me. Nothing could be more rich. I must give her a glimpse of such a scene. It will be a very good mode of operation. Her pride and vanity will do the rest. I have only to intimate the future sway—the exclusive sovereignty which would follow—the overthrow of the ancient idols, and the setting up of a true divinity in herself. But shall it be so, Master Stevens? Verily, that will be seen hereafter. Enough, if the delusion takes. If I can delude the woman through the muse, I am satisfied. The muse after that may dispose of the woman as she pleases.”

Such was a portion of the soliloquy of the libertine as he rode slowly back to Charlemont. His further musings we need not pursue at present. It is enough to say that they were of the same family character. He returned to his room as soon as he reached his lodging-house, and drawing from his pocket a bundle of letters which he had intended putting in the postoffice at Ellisland, he carefully locked them up in his portable writing-desk which he kept at the bottom of his valise. When the devout Mrs. Hinkley tapped at his door to summon him to dinner, the meritorious young man was to be seen, seated at his table, with the massive Bible of the family conspicuously open before him. Good young man! never did he invoke a blessing on the meats with more holy unction than on that very day.

Meanwhile, let us resume our progress with William Hinkley, and inquire in what manner his wooing sped with the woman whom he so unwisely loved. We have seen him leaving the cottage of Mr. Calvert with the avowed purpose of seeking a final answer. A purpose from which the old man did not seek to dissuade him, though he readily conceived its fruitlessness. It was with no composed spirit that the young rustic felt himself approaching the house of Mrs. Cooper. More than once he hesitated and

even halted. But a feeling of shame, and the efforts of returning manliness re-resolved him, and he hurried with an unwonted rapidity of movement toward the dwelling, as if he distrusted his own power, unless he did so, to conclude the labor he had begun.

He gathered some courage when he found that Margaret was from home. She had gone on her usual rambles. Mrs. Cooper pointed out the course which she had taken, and the young man set off in pursuit. The walks of the maiden were of course well known to a lover so devoted. He had sought and followed her a thousand times, and the general direction which she had gone, once known, his progress was as direct as his discoveries were certain. The heart of the youth, dilated with better hopes as he felt himself traversing the old familiar paths. It seemed to him that the fates could scarcely be adverse in a region which had always been so friendly. Often had he escorted her along this very route, when their spirits better harmonized — when, more of the girl struggling into womanhood, the mind of Margaret Cooper, ignorant of its own resources and unconscious of its maturer desires, was more gentle, and could rejoice in that companionship for which she now betrayed so little desire. The sheltered paths and well-known trees, even the little clumps of shrubbery that filled up the intervals, were too pleasant and familiar to his eye not to seem favorable to his progress, and with a hope that had no foundation, save in the warm and descriptive colors of a young heart's fancy, William Hinkley pursued the route which led him to one of the most lovely and love-haunted glades in all Kentucky.

So sweet a hush never hallowed the sabbath rest of any forest. The very murmur of a drowsy zephyr among the leaves was of slumberous tendency; and silence prevailed, with the least possible exertion of her authority, over the long narrow dell through which the maiden had gone wandering. At the foot of a long slope, to which his eye was

conducted by a natural and lovely vista, the youth beheld the object of his search, sitting, motionless, with her back toward him. The reach of light was bounded by her figure, which was seated on the decaying trunk of a fallen tree. She was deeply wrapped in thought, for she did not observe his approach, and when his voice reached her ears, and she started and looked round, her eyes were full of tears. These she hastily brushed away, and met the young man with a degree of composure which well might have put the blush upon his cheek, for the want of it.

"In tears!—weeping, Margaret?" was the first address of the lover who necessarily felt shocked at what he saw.

"They were secret tears, sir—not meant for other eyes," was the reproachful reply.

"Ah, Margaret! but why should you have secret tears, when you might have sympathy—why should you have tears at all? You have no sorrows."

"Sympathy!" was the exclamation of the maiden, while a scornful smile gleamed from her eyes; "whose sympathy, I pray?"

The young man hesitated to answer. The expression of her eye discouraged him. He dreaded lest, in offering his sympathies, he should extort from her lips a more direct intimation of that scorn which he feared. He chose a middle course.

"But that you should have sorrows, Margaret, seems very strange to me. You are young and hearty; endowed beyond most of your sex, and with a beauty which can not be too much admired. Your mother is hearty and happy, and for years you have had no loss of relations to deplore. I see not why you should have sorrows."

"It is very likely, William Hinkley, that you do not see. The ordinary sorrows of mankind arise from the loss of wives and cattle, children and property. There are sorrows of another kind; sorrows of the soul; the consciousness of denial; of strife—strife to be continued—strife

without victory—baffled hopes—defeated aims and energies. These are sorrows which are not often computed in the general account. It is highly probable that none of them afflict you. You have your parents, and very good people they are. You yourself are no doubt a very good young man—so everybody says—and you have health and strength. Besides, you have property, much more, I am told, than falls to the lot ordinarily of young people in this country. These are reasons why you should not feel any sorrow; but were all these mine and a great deal more, I'm afraid it would not make me any more contented. You, perhaps, will not understand this, William Hinkley, but I assure you that such, nevertheless is my perfect conviction."

"Yes, I can, and do understand it, Margaret," said the young man, with flushed cheek and a very tremulous voice, as he listened to language which, though not intended to be contemptuous, was yet distinctly colored by that scornful estimate which the maiden had long since made of the young man's abilities. In this respect she had done injustice to his mind, which had been kept in subjection and deprived of its ordinary strength and courage, by the enfeebling fondness of his heart.

"Yes, Margaret," he continued, "I can and do understand it, and I too have my sorrows of this very sort. Do not smile, Margaret, but hear me patiently, and believe, that, whatever may be the error which I commit, I have no purpose to offend you in what I say or do. Perhaps, we are both of us quite too young to speak of the sorrows which arise from defeated hopes, or baffled energies, or denial of our rights and claims. The yearnings and apprehensions which we are apt to feel of this sort are not to be counted as sorrows, or confounded with them. I had a conversation on this very subject only a few days ago, with old Mr. Calvert, and this was his very opinion."

The frankness with which William Hinkley declared the

source of his opinions, though creditable to his sincerity, was scarcely politic—it served to confirm Margaret Cooper in the humble estimate which she had formed of the speaker.

“Mr. Calvert,” said she, “is a very sensible old man, but neither he nor you can enter into the heart of another and say what shall, or what shall not be its source of trouble. It is enough, William Hinkley, that I have my cares—at least I fancy that I have them—and though I am very grateful for your sympathies, I do not know that they can do me any good, and, though I thank you, I must yet decline them.”

“Oh, do not say so, Margaret—dear Margaret—it is to proffer them that I seek you now. You know how long I have sought you, and loved you: you can not know how dear you are to my eyes, how necessary to my happiness! Do not repulse me—do not speak quickly. What I am, and what I have, is yours. We have grown up together; I have known no other hope, no other love, but that for you. Look not upon me with that scornful glance—hear me—I implore you—on my knee, dear Margaret. I implore you as for life—for something more dear than life—that which will make life precious—which may make it valuable. Be mine, dear Margaret——”

“Rise, William Hinkley, and do not forget yourself!” was the stern, almost deliberate answer of the maiden.

“Do not, I pray you, do not speak in those tones, dear Margaret—do not look on me with those eyes. Remember before you speak, that the dearest hope of a devoted heart hangs upon your lips.”

“And what have you seen in me, or what does your vain conceit behold in yourself, William Hinkley, to make you entertain a hope?”

“The meanest creature has it.”

“Aye, but only of creatures like itself.”

“Margaret!” exclaimed the lover starting to his feet.

“Ay, sir, I say it. If the meanest creature has its hope, it relates to a creature like itself—endowed with its own nature and fed with like sympathies. But you—what should make you hope of me? Have I not long avoided you, discouraged you? I would have spared you the pain of this moment by escaping it myself. You haunt my steps—you pursue me—you annoy me with attentions which I dare not receive for fear of encouraging you, and in spite of all this, which everybody in the village must have seen but yourself, you still press yourself upon me.”

“Margaret Cooper, be not so proud!”

“I am what I am! I know that I am proud—vain, perhaps, and having little to justify either pride or vanity; but to you, William Hinkley, as an act of justice, I must speak what I feel—what is the truth. I am sorry, from my very soul, that you love me, for I can have no feeling for you in return. I do not dislike you, but you have so oppressed me that I would prefer not to see you. We have no feelings in common. You can give me no sympathies. My soul, my heart, my hope—every desire of my mind, every impulse of my heart, leads me away from you—from all that you can give—from all that you can relish. To you it would suffice, if all your life could be spent here in Charlemont—to me it would be death to think that any such doom hung over me. From this one sentiment judge of the rest, and know, for good and all, that I can never feel for you other than I feel now. I can not love you, nor can the knowledge that you love me, give me any but a feeling of pain and mortification.”

William Hinkley had risen to his feet. His form had put on an unusual erectness. His eye had gradually become composed; and now it wore an expression of firmness almost amounting to defiance. He heard her with only an occasional quiver of the muscles about his mouth. The flush of shame and pride was still red upon his cheek

When she had finished, he spoke to her in tones of more dignity than had hitherto marked his speech.

“Margaret Cooper, you have at least chosen the plainest language to declare a cruel truth.”

The cheek of the girl became suddenly flushed.

“Do you suppose,” she said, “that I found pleasure in giving you pain? No! William Hinkley, I am sorry for you! But this truth, which you call cruel, was shown to you repeatedly before. Any man but yourself would have seen it, and saved me the pain of its frequent repetition. You alone refused to understand, until it was rendered cruel. It was only by the plainest language that you could be made to believe a truth that you either would not or could not otherwise be persuaded to hear. If cold looks, reserved answers, and a determined rejection of all familiarity could have availed, you would never have heard from my lips a solitary word which could have brought you mortification. You would have seen my feelings in my conduct, and would have spared your own that pain, which I religiously strove to save them.”

“I have, indeed, been blind and deaf,” said the young man; “but you have opened my eyes and ears, Margaret, so that I am fully cured of these infirmities. If your purpose, in this plain mode of speech, be such as you have declared it, then I must thank you; though it is very much as one would thank the dagger that puts him out of his pain by putting him out of life.”

There was so much of subdued feeling in this address — the more intense in its effect, from the obvious restraint put upon it, that the heart of the maiden was touched. The dignified bearing of the young man, also — so different from that which marked his deportment hitherto — was not without its effect.

“I assure you, William Hinkley, that such alone was my motive for what else would seem a most wanton harshness. I would not be harsh to you or to anybody; and

with my firm rejection of your proffer, I give you my regrets that you ever made it. It gives me no pleasure that you should make it. If I am vain, my vanity is not flattered or quickened by a tribute which I can not accept; and if you never had my sympathy before, William Hinkley, I freely give it now. Once more I tell you, I am sorry, from the bottom of my heart, that you ever felt for me a passion which I can not requite, and that you did not stifle it from the beginning; as, Heaven knows, my bearing toward you, for a whole year, seemed to me to convey sufficient warning."

"It should have done so! I can now very easily understand it, Margaret. Indeed, Mr. Calvert and others told me the same thing. But as I have said, I was blind and deaf. Once more, I thank you, Margaret—it is a bitter medicine which you have given me, but I trust a wholesome one."

He caught her hand and pressed it in his own. She did not resist or withdraw it, and, after the retention of an instant only, he released it, and was about to turn away. A big tear was gathering in his eye, and he strove to conceal it. Margaret averted her head, and was about to move forward in an opposite direction, when the voice of the young man arrested her:—

"Stay, but a few moments more, Margaret. Perhaps we shall never meet again—certainly not in a conference like this. I may have no other opportunity to say that which, in justice to you, should be spoken. Will you listen to me, patiently?"

"Speak boldly, William Hinkley. It was the subject of which you spoke heretofore which I shrunk from rather than the speaker."

"I know not," said he, "whether the subject of which I propose to speak now will be any more agreeable than that of which we have spoken. At all events, my purpose is your good, and I shall speak unreservedly. You have refused the prayer of one heart, Margaret, which, if unworthy

of yours, was yet honestly and fervently devoted to it. Let me warn you to look well when you do choose, lest you fall into the snares of one, who with more talent may be less devoted, and with more claims to admiration, may be far less honest in his purpose."

"What mean you, sir?" she demanded hurriedly, with an increasing glow upon her face.

"This stranger — this man, Stevens!"

"What of him? What do you know of the stranger that you should give me this warning?"

"What does anybody know of him? Whence does he come — whither would he go? What brings him here to this lonely village?"

A proud smile which curled the lips of Margaret Cooper arrested the speech of the youth. It seemed to say, very distinctly, that she, at least, could very well conjecture what brought the stranger so far from the travelled haunts.

"Ha! do you then know, Margaret?"

"And if I did not, William Hinkley, these base insinuations against the man, of whom, knowing nothing, you would still convey the worst imputations, would never move my mind a hair's breadth from its proper balance. Go, sir — you have your answer. I need not your counsel. I should be sorry to receive it from such a source. Failing in your own attempt, you would seek to fill my mind with calumnious impressions in order to prejudice the prospects of another. For shame! for shame, William Hinkley. I had not thought this of you. But go! go! go, at once, lest I learn to loathe as well as despise you. I thought you simple and foolish, but honorable and generous. I was mistaken even in this. Go, sir, your slanderous insinuations have no effect upon me, and as for Alfred Stevens, you are as far below him in nobleness and honest purpose, as you are in every quality of taste and intellect."

Her face was the very breathing image of idealized scorn and beauty as she uttered these stinging words. Her lips

trils were dilated, her eyes flashing fire, her lips slightly protruded and parted, her hand waving him off. The young man gazed upon her with wild looks equally expressive of anger and agony. His form fairly writhed beneath his emotions ; but he found strength enough gaspingly to exclaim :—

“ And even this I forgive you, Margaret.”

“ Go ! go !” she answered ; “ you know not what you say, or what you are. Go ! go !”

And turning away, she moved slowly up the long avenue before her, till, by a sudden turn of the path she was hidden from the sight. Then, when his eye could no longer follow her form, the agony of his soul burst forth in a single groan, and staggering, he fell forward upon the sward, hopeless, reckless, in a wretched condition of self-abandonment and despair.

CHAPTER XX.

BLOWS — A CRISIS.

BUT this mood lasted not long. Youth, pride, anger, asserted themselves before the lapse of many minutes. Darker feelings got possession of his mind. He rose to his feet. If love was baffled, was there not revenge? Then came the recollection of his cousin's counsel. Should this artful stranger triumph in everything? Margaret Cooper had scarcely disguised the interest which she felt in him. Nay, had not that exulting glance of the eye declared that she, at least, knew what was the purpose of Stevens in seeking the secluded village? His own wrongs were also present to his mind. This usurper had possessed himself of the affections of all he loved—of all of whose love he had till then felt himself secure—all but the good old schoolmaster, and the sturdy schoolmate and cousin. And how soon might he deprive him even of these? That was a new fear! So rapid had been the stranger's progress—so adroitly had he insinuated himself into this Eden of the wilderness—bringing discontent and suffering in his train—that the now thoroughly-miserable youth began to fancy that nothing could be safe from his influence. In a short time his garden would all be overrun, and his loveliest plants would wither.

Was there no remedy for this? There was! and traversing the solemn recesses of that wood, he meditated the various modes by which the redress of wrong, and slight,

and indignity, were to be sought. He brooded over images of strife, and dark and savage ideas of power rioting over its victim, with entirely new feelings—feelings new at least to him. We have not succeeded in doing him justice, nor in our own design, if we have failed to show that he was naturally gentle of heart, rigidly conscientious, a lover of justice for its own sake, and solicitously sensitive on the subject of another's feelings. But the sense of suffering will blind the best judgment, and the feeling of injury will arouse and irritate the gentlest nature. Besides, William Hinkley, though meek and conscientious, had not passed through his youth, in the beautiful but wild border country in which he lived, without having been informed, and somewhat influenced, by those characteristic ideas of the modes and manner in which personal wrongs were to be redressed.

Perhaps, had his cousin said nothing to him on this subject, his feelings would have had very much the same tendency and general direction which they were taking now. A dark and somewhat pleasurable anxiety to be in conflict with his rival—a deadly conflict—a close, hard death-struggle—was now the predominant feeling in his mind;—but the feeling was not *altogether* a pleasurable one. It had its pains and humiliations, also. Not that he had any fears—any dread of the issue. Of the issue he never thought. But it disturbed the long and peaceful order of his life. It conflicted with the subdued tastes of the student. It was at war with that gentle calm of atmosphere, which letters diffuse around the bower of the muse.

In the conflict of his thoughts and feelings, the judgment of the youth was impaired. He forgot his prudence. In fact, he knew not what he did. He entered the dwelling of his father, and passed into the dining-room, at that solemn moment when the grace before meat was yet in course of utterance by our worthy Brother Stevens. Hitherto, old Mr. Hinkley had religiously exacted that, whenever any of

the household failed to be present in season, this ceremony should never be disturbed. They were required, hat in hand, to remain at the entrance, until the benediction had been implored ; and, only after the audible utterance of the word "Amen," to approach the cloth.

We have shown little of old Hinkley. It has not been necessary. The reader has seen enough, however, to understand that, in religious matters—at least in the forms and externals of religion—he was a rigid disciplinarian. Upon grace before and after meat he always insisted. His own prayers of this sort might have been unctuous, but they were never short ; and the meats were very apt to grow cold, while the impatience of his hearers grew warm, before he finished. But through respect to the profession, he waived his own peculiar privilege in behalf of Brother Stevens ; and this holy brother was in the middle of his entreaty, when William Hinkley appeared at the door. He paused for an instant without taking off his hat. Perhaps had his father been engaged in his office, William would have forborne, as usual, however long the grace, and have patiently waited without, hat off, until it had reached the legitimate conclusion. But he had no such veneration for Stevens ; and without scruple he dashed, rather hastily, into the apartment, and flinging his hat upon a chair, strode at once to the table.

The old man did not once raise his eyes until the prayer was over. He would not have done so had the house been on fire. But at the close, he looked up at his son with a brow of thunder. The cloud was of serious and very unusual blackness. He had for some time been dissatisfied with his son. He had seen that the youth entertained some aversion for his guest. Besides, he had learned from his worthy consort, that, in an endeavor of Brother Stevens to bestow good counsel upon the youth, he had been repulsed with as little respect as ceremony. There was one thing that the stern old man had not seen, and could not see ;

and that was the altered appearance of the lad. As he knew of no reason why he should be unhappy, so he failed to perceive in his appearance any of the signs of unhappiness. He saw nothing but the violation of his laws, and that sort of self-esteem which produces fanaticism, is always the most rigid in the enforcement of its own ordinances. Already he regarded the youth as in a state of rebellion, and for such an offence his feeling was very much that of the ancient puritan. No one more insists upon duty, than he who has attained authority by flinging off the fetters of obedience. Your toughest sinner usually makes the sourest saint.

"And is this the way, William Hinkley, that you show respect to God? Do you despise the blessing which Brother Stevens asks upon the food which sustains us?"

"I presume, sir, that God has already blessed all the food which he bestows upon man. I do not think that any prayer of Brother Stevens can render it more blessed."

"Ha! you do not, do you? Please to rise from this table."

"Nay, sir—" began Stevens.

"Rise, sir," continued the old man, laying down knife and fork, and confronting the offender with that dogged look of determination which in a coarse nature is the sure sign of moral inflexibility.

"Forgive him, sir, this time," said Stevens; "I entreat you to forgive him. The young man knows not what he does."

"I will make him know," continued the other.

"Plead not for me, sir," said William Hinkley, glaring upon Stevens with something of that expression which in western parlance is called wolfish, "I scorn and spurn your interference."

"William, William, my dear son, do not speak so—do not make your father angry."

"Will you leave the table, sir, or not?" demanded the

father, his words being spoken very slowly, through his teeth, and with the effort of one who seeks to conceal the growing agitation. The eyes of the mother fell upon the youth full of tears and entreaty. His fine countenance betrayed the conflicting emotions of his soul. There was grief, and anger, despair and defiance; the consciousness of being wrong, and the more painful consciousness of suffering wrong. He half started from his chair, again resumed it, and gazing upon Stevens with the hate and agony which he felt, seemed to be entirely forgetful of the words and presence of the father. The old man deliberately rose from the table and left the room. The mother now started up in an agony of fear.

“Run, my son—leave the room before your father comes back. Speak to him, Brother Stevens, and tell him of the danger.”

“Do not call upon him, mother, if you would not have me defy you also. If *your* words will not avail with me, be sure that his can not.”

“What mean you, my son? You surely have no cause to be angry with Brother Stevens.”

“No cause! no cause!—but it matters not! *Brother* Stevens knows that I have cause. He has heard my defiance—he knows my scorn and hate, and he shall feel them!”

“William, my son, how—”

The steps of the father, approaching through the passage-way, diverted her mind to a new terror. She knew the vindictive and harsh nature of the old man; and apprehensions for her son superseded the feeling of anger which his language had provoked.

“Oh, my son, be submissive, or fly. Jump out of the window, and leave Brother Stevens and me to pacify him. We will do all we can.”

The unlucky allusion to Brother Stevens only increased the young man's obstinacy.

“I ask you not, mother. I wish you to do nothing, and

to say nothing. Here I will remain. I will not fly. It will be for my father and mother to say whether they will expel their only son from their home, to make room for a stranger."

"It shall not be said that I have been the cause of this," said Stevens, rising with dignity from his chair; "I will leave your house, Mrs. Hinkley, only regretting that I should be the innocent cause of any misunderstanding or discontent among its members. I know not exactly what can be the meaning of your son's conduct. I have never offended him; but, as my presence does offend him, I will withdraw myself—"

"You shall not!" exclaimed old Hinkley, who re-entered the room at this moment, and had heard the last words of the speaker. "You shall not leave the house. Had I fifty sons, and they were all to behave in the manner of this viper, they should all leave it before you should stir from the threshold."

The old man brought with him a cowskin; and the maternal apprehensions of his wife, who knew his severe and determined disposition, were now awakened to such a degree as to overcome the feeling of deference, if not fear, with which the authority of her liege lord had always inspired her.

"Mr. Hinkley, you won't strike William with that whip—you must not—you shall not!" and, speaking thus, she started up and threw herself in the old man's way. He put her aside with no measured movement of his arm, and approached the side of the table where the young man sat.

"Run, William, run, if you love me!" cried the terrified mother.

"I will not run!" was the answer of the youth, who rose from his seat, however, at the same moment and confronted his father.

"Do not strike me, father! I warn you—do not strike me. I may be wrong, but I have suffered wrong. I did

not mean, and do not mean, to offend you. Let that content you, but do not strike me.”

The answer was a blow. The whip descended once, and but once, upon the shoulders of the young man. His whole frame was in a convulsion. His eyes dilated with the anguish of his soul; his features worked spasmodically. There was a moment's hesitation. The arm that smote him was again uplifted—the cruel and degrading instrument of punishment a second time about to descend; when, with the strength of youth, and the determination of manhood, the son grasped the arm of the father, and, without any more than the degree of violence necessary to effect his object, he tore the weapon from the uplifted hand.

“I can not strike *you*!” he exclaimed, addressing the old man. “That blow has lost you your son—for ever! The shame and the dishonor shall rest on other shoulders. They are better deserved here, and here I place them!”

With these words, he smote Stevens over the shoulders, once, twice, thrice, before the latter could close with him, or the father interfere to arrest the attempt. Stevens sprang upon him, but the more athletic countryman flung him off, and still maintained his weapon. The father added his efforts to those of Stevens; but he shook himself free from both, and, by this time, the mother had contrived to place herself between the parties. William Hinkley then flung the whip from the window, and moved toward the door. In passing Stevens, he muttered a few words:—

“If there is any skin beneath the cloak of the parson, I trust I have reached it.”

“Enough!” said the other, in the same low tone. “You shall have your wish.”

The youth looked back once, with tearful eyes, upon his mother; and making no other answer but a glance more full of sorrow than anger to the furious flood of denunciation which the old man continued to pour forth, he preceded slowly from the apartment and the dwelling.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHALLENGE.

THE whole scene passed in very few minutes. No time was given for reflection, and each of the parties obeyed his natural or habitual impulses. Old Hinkley, except when at prayers, was a man of few words. He was much more prompt at deeds than words—a proof of which has already been shown; but the good mother was not so patient, and made a freer use of the feminine weapon than we have been willing to inflict upon our readers. Though she heartily disapproved of her son's conduct toward Stevens, and regarded it as one of the most unaccountable wonders, the offender was still her son. She never once forgot, or could forget, that. But the rage of the old man was unappeasable. The indignity to his guest, and that guest of a calling so sacred, was past all forgiveness, as it was past all his powers of language fitly to describe. He swore to pursue the offender with his wrath to the end of the world, to cut him off equally from his fortune and forgiveness; and when Brother Stevens, endeavoring to maintain the pacific and forgiving character which his profession required, uttered some commonplace pleading in the youth's behalf, he silenced him by saying that, “were he on the bed of death, and were the offender then to present himself, the last prayer that he should make to Heaven would be for sufficient strength to rise up and complete the punishment which he had then begun.”

As for Stevens, though he professed a more charitable spirit, his feelings were quite as hostile, and much more deadly. He was not without that conventional courage which makes one, in certain states of society, prompt enough to place himself in the fields of the duello. To this condition of preparedness it has hitherto been the training of the West that every man, at all solicitous of public life, must eventually come. As a student of divinity, it was not a necessity with Alfred Stevens. Nay, it was essential to the character which he professed that he should eschew such a mode of arbitrament. But he reasoned on this subject, as well with reference to past habits as to future responsibilities. His present profession being simply a *ruse d'amour* (and, as he already began to perceive, a harmless one in the eyes of the beauty whom he sought, and whose intense feelings and unregulated mind did not suffer her to perceive the serious defects of a character which should attempt so impious a fraud), he was beginning to be somewhat indifferent to its preservation; and, with the decline of his caution in this respect, arose the natural inquiry as to what would be expected of him in his former relations to society. Should it ever be known hereafter, at a time when he stood before the people as a candidate for some high political trust, that he had tamely submitted to the infliction of a cowskin, the revelation would be fatal to all his hopes of ambition, and conclusive against all his social pretensions. In short, so far as society was concerned, it would be his social death.

These considerations were felt in their fullest force. Indeed, their force can not well be conceived by the citizen of any community where the sense of individual responsibility is less rigid and exacting. They naturally outweighed all others in the mind of Alfred Stevens; and, though no fire-eater, he not only resolved on fighting with Hinkley, but, smarting under the strokes of the cowskin—heavily laid on as they had been—his resolution was equally firm

that, in the conflict, they should not separate until blood was drawn. Of course, there were some difficulties to be overcome in bringing about the meeting, but, where the parties are willing, most difficulties are surmounted with tolerable ease. This being the case at present, it followed that both minds were busy at the same moment in devising the when, the how, and the where, of the encounter.

William Hinkley went from the house of his father to that of his cousin ; but the latter had not yet returned from that ride which he had taken in order to discover the course usually pursued by Stevens. Here he sat down to dinner, but the sister of Ned Hinkley observed that he ate little, and fancied he was sick. That he should come to dine with his cousin was too frequent a matter to occasion question or surprise. This lady was older than her brother by some seven years. She was a widow, with an only child, a girl. The child was a prattling, smiling, good-natured thing, about seven years old, who was never so happy as when on Cousin William's knee. Poor William, indeed, was quite a favorite at every house in the village except that of Margaret Cooper, and, as he sometimes used bitterly to add, his own. On this occasion, however, the child was rendered unhappy by the seeming indifference of Cousin William. The heart of the young man was too full of grief, and his mind of anxiety, to suffer him to bestow the usual caresses upon her ; and when, putting her down, he passed into the chamber of Ned Hinkley, the little thing went off to her mother, to complain of the neglect she had undergone.

"Cousin William don't love Susan any more, mamma," was the burden of her complaint.

"Why do you say so, Susan?"

"He don't kiss me, mamma ; he don't keep me in his lap. He don't say good things to me, and call me his little sweetheart. I'm afraid Cousin William's got some other sweetheart. He don't love Susan."

It was while the little prattler was pouring forth her infantile sorrows in her mother's ear, that the voice of William Hinkley was heard, calling her name from the chamber.

"There, he's calling you now, Susan. Run to him and kiss him, and see what he wants. I'm sure he loves you just as much as ever. He's got no other sweetheart."

"I'll run, mamma—that I will. I'm so glad! I hope he loves me!" and the little innocent scampered away to the chamber. Her artless tongue, as she approached, enabled him to perceive what had been her grievances.

"Do you call me to love me, and to kiss me, Cousin William, and to make me your sweetheart again?"

"Yes, Susan, you shall be my only sweetheart. I will kiss nobody but you."

"You'll forget—you will—you'll put me out of your lap, and go away shaking your head, and looking so!—" and here the observant little creature attempted a childish imitation of the sad action and the strange, moody gestures with which he had put her down when he was retiring from the room—gestures and looks which the less quick eyes of her mother had failed utterly to perceive.

"No, no!" said he, with a sad smile; "no, Susan. I'll keep you in my lap for an hour whenever I come, and you shall be my sweetheart always."

"Your *little* sweetheart, your *little* Susan, Cousin William."

"Yes, my dear little Susan, my dearest little sweetheart Susan."

And he kissed the child fondly while he spoke, and patted her rosy cheeks with a degree of tenderness which his sad and wandering thoughts did not materially diminish.

"But now, Susan," said he, "if I am to be your sweetheart, and to love you always, you must do all that I bid you. You must go where I send you."

"Don't I, Cousin William? When you send me to Gran'pa Calvert, don't I go and bring you books, and didn't

I always run, and come back soon, and never play by the way?"

"You're a dear Susan," said he; "and I want you to carry a paper for me now. Do you see this little paper? What is it?"

"A note—don't I know?"

"Well, you must carry this note for me to uncle's, but you mustn't give it to uncle, nor to aunty, nor to anybody but the young man that lives there—young Mr. Stevens."

"Parson Stevens," said the little thing, correcting him.

"Ay, ay, Parson Stevens, if you please. You must give it to him, and him only; and he will give you a paper to bring back to me. Will you go now, Susan?"

"Yes, I'll go: but, Cousin William, are you going to shoot the little guns? Don't shoot them till I come back, will you?"

The child pointed to a pair of pistols which lay upon the table where William Hinkley had penned the billet. A flush of consciousness passed over the young man's cheek. It seemed to him as if the little innocent's inquiry had taken the aspect of an accusation. He promised and dismissed her, and, when she had disappeared, proceeded to put the pistols in some condition for use. In that time and region, duels were not often fought with those costly and powerful weapons, the pistols of rifle bore and sight. The rifle, or the ordinary horseman's pistol, answered the purposes of hate. The former instrument, in the hands of the Kentuckian, was a deadly weapon always; and, in the grasp of a firm hand, and under the direction of a practised eye, the latter, at ten paces, was scarcely less so. This being the case, but few refinements were necessary to bring about the most fatal issues of enmity; and the instruments which William Hinkley was preparing for the field were such as would produce a smile on the lips of more civilized combatants. They were of the coarsest kind of holster-pistols, and had probably seen service in the Revolution.

The stocks were rickety, the barrels thin, the bore almost large enough for grape, and really such as would receive and disgorge a three-ounce bullet with little straining or reluctance. They had been the property of his own grandfather, and their value for use was perhaps rather heightened than diminished by the degree of veneration which, in the family, was attached to their history.

William Hinkley soon put them in the most efficient order. He was not a practised hand, but an American for ester is a good shot almost by instinct; he naturally cleaves to a gun, and without instruction learns its use. William, however, did not think much of what he could hit, at what distance, and under what circumstances. Nothing, perhaps, could better show the confidence in himself and weapon than the inattention which the native-born woodman usually exhibits to these points. Let his weapon be such as he can rely upon, and his cause of quarrel such as can justify his anger, and the rest seems easy, and gives him little annoyance. This was now the case with our rustic. He never, for a moment, thought of practising. He had shot repeatedly, and knew what he could do. His simple object was to bring his enemy to the field, and to meet him there. Accordingly, when he had loaded both pistols, which he did with equal care, and with a liberal allowance of lead and powder, he carefully put them away without offering to test his own skill or their capacities. On this subject, his indifference would have appeared, to a regular duellist, the very extreme of obtuseness.

His little courier conveyed his billet to Stevens in due season. As she had been instructed, she gave it into the hands of Stevens only; but, when she delivered it, old Hinkley was present, and she named the person by whom it was sent.

"My son! what does he say?" demanded the old man, half-suspecting the purport of the billet.

"Ah!" exclaimed Stevens, with the readiness of a prac-

tised actor, "there is some hope, I am glad to tell you, Mr. Hinkley, of his coming to his senses. He declares his wish to atone, and invites me to see him. I have no doubt that he wishes me to mediate for him."

"I will never forgive him while I have breath!" cried the old man, leaving the room. "Tell him that!"

"Wait a moment, my pretty one," said Stevens, as he was about retiring to his chamber, "till I can write an answer."

The billet of Hinkley he again read. We may do so likewise. It was to the following effect:—

"SIR: If I understood your last assurance on leaving you this day, I am to believe that the stroke of my whip has made its proper impression on your soul—that you are willing to use the ordinary means of ordinary persons, to avenge an indignity which was not *confined to your cloth*. If so, meet me at the lake with whatever weapons you choose to bring. I will be there, provided with pistols for both, at any hour from three to six. I shall proceed to the spot as soon as I receive your answer. "W. H."

"Short and sharp!" exclaimed Stevens as he read the billet. "'Who would have thought that the *young* man had so much blood in him!' Well, we will not balk your desire, Master Hinkley. We will meet you, in verity, though it may compel me to throw up my present hand and call for other cards. *N'importe*: there is no other course."

While soliloquizing, he penned his answer, which was brief and to the purpose:—

"I will meet you as soon as I can steal off without provoking suspicion. I have pistols which I will bring with me. "A. S."

"There, my little damsel," said he, re-entering the dining-room, and putting the sealed paper into the hands of

the child, "carry that to Mr. Hinkley, and tell him I will come and speak with him as he begs me. But the note will tell him."

"Yes, sir."

"So——"

Mrs. Hinkley entered the room at this moment. Her husband had apprized her of the communication which her son had made, and the disposition to atonement and repentance which he had expressed. She was anxious to confirm this good disposition, to have her son brought back within the fold, restored to her own affections and the favor of his father. The latter, it is true, had signified his determined hostility, even while conveying his intelligence; but the mother was sanguine—when was a mother otherwise?—that all things would come right which related to her only child. She now came to implore the efforts of Stevens; to entreat, that, like a good Christian, he would not suffer the shocking stripes which her son, in his madness, had inflicted upon him to outweigh his charity, to get the better of his blessed principles, and make him war upon the atoning spirit which had so lately, and so suddenly wakened up in the bosom of the unruly boy. She did not endeavor to qualify the offence of which her son had been guilty. She was far from underrating the indignity to which Stevens had been subjected; but the offender was her son—her only son—in spite of all his faults, follies, and imperfections, the apple of her eye—the only being for whom she cared to live!

Ah! the love of a mother!—what a holy thing! sadly wanting in judgment—frequently misleading, perverting, nay, dooming the object which it loves; but, nevertheless, most pure; least selfish; truest; most devoted!

And the tears gushed from the old woman's eyes as she caught the hand of Stevens in her own, and kissed it—kissed *his* hand—could William Hinkley have seen *that*, how it would have rankled, how he would have writhed!

She kissed the hands of that wily hypocrite, bedewing them with her tears, as if he were some benign and blessing saint; and not because he had shown any merits or practised any virtues, but simply because of certain professions which he had made, and in which she had perfect faith because of the professions, and not because of any previous knowledge which she had of the professor. Truly, it behoves a rogue monstrous much to know what garment it is best to wear; the question is equally important to rogue and dandy.

Stevens made a thousand assurances in the most Christian spirit—we can not say that he gave her tear for tear—promised to do his best to bring back the prodigal son to her embrace, and the better to effect this object, put his pistols under his belt! Within the hour he was on his way to the place of meeting.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOOT TO FOOT.

WILLIAM HINKLEY was all impatience until his little messenger returned, which she did with a speed which might deserve commendation in the case of our professional Mercuries—stage-drivers and mail contractors, hight! He did not withhold it from the little maid, but taking her in his arms, and kissing her fondly, he despatched her to her mother, while he wrapped up his pistols and concealing them in the folds of his coat, hurried from the house with the anxious haste of one who is going to seek his prey. He felt somewhat like that broad-winged eagle which broods on the projecting pinnacle of yonder rocky peak in waiting for the sea-hawk who is stooping far below him, watching when the sun's rays shall glisten from the uprising fins of his favorite fish. But it was not a selfish desire to secure the prey which the terror of the other might cause him to drop. It was simply to punish the prowler. Poor William could not exactly tell indeed why he wished to shoot Alfred Stevens; but his cause of hostility was not less cogent because it had no name. The thousand little details which induce our prejudices in regard to persons, are, singly, worth no one's thought, and would possibly provoke the contempt of all; but like the myriad threads which secured the huge frame of Gulliver in his descent upon Lilliput, they are, when united, able to bind the biggest giant of us all.

The prejudices of William Hinkley, though very natural

in such a case as his, seemed to him very much like instincts. It seemed to him, if he once reasoned on the matter, that, as he had good cause to hate the intruder, so there must be justification for shooting him. Were this not so, the policy of hating would be very questionable, and surely very unprofitable. It would be a great waste of a very laudable quantity of feeling—something like omitting one's bullet in discharging one's piece—a profligacy only justifiable in a *feu de joie* after victory, where the bullets have already done all necessary mischief, and will warrant a small subsequent waste of the more harmless material.

Without designing any such child's play, our rustic hero, properly equipped with his antique pistols, well charged, close rammed, three-ounce bullets, or nearabouts, in each, stood, breathing fire but without cooling, on the edge of the lake, perched on an eminence and looking out for the coming enemy. He was playing an unwonted character, but he felt as if it were quite familiar to him. He had none of that nice feeling which, without impugning courage, is natural enough to inexperience in such cases. The muzzles of the pistols did not appear to him particularly large. He never once thought of his own ribs being traversed by his three-ounce messengers. He had no misgivings on the subject of his future digestion. He only thought of that blow from his father's hand—that keen shaft from the lips of Margaret Cooper—that desolation which had fallen upon his soul from the scorn of both; and the vengeance which it was in his power to inflict upon the fortunate interloper to whose arts he ascribed all his misfortunes! and with these thoughts his fury and impatience increased, and he ascended the highest hill to look out for his foe; descended, in the next moment, to the edge of the lake, the better to prepare for the meeting.

In this state of excitement the meekness had departed from his countenance; an entire change of expression had taken place: he stood up, erect, bold, eagle-eyed, with the

look of one newly made a man by the form of indomitable will, and feeling, for the first time, man's terrible commission to destroy. In a moment, with the acquisition of new moods, he had acquired a new aspect. Hitherto, he had been tame, seemingly devoid of spirit—you have not forgotten the reproaches of his cousin, which actually conveyed an imputation against his manliness?—shrinking, with a feeling of shyness akin to *mauvaise honte*, and almost submitting to injustice, to avoid the charge of ill-nature. The change that we have described in his soul, had made itself singularly apparent in his looks. They were full of a grim determination. Had he gazed upon his features, in the glassy surface of the lake beside him, he had probably recoiled from their expression.

We have seen Mrs. Hinkley sending Stevens forth for the purpose of recalling her son to his senses, receiving his repentance, and bringing him once more home into the bosom of his flock. We have not forgotten the brace of arguments with which he provided himself in order to bring about this charitable determination. Stevens was a shot. He could snuff his candle at ten paces, sever his bamboo, divide the fingers of the hand with separate bullets without grazing the skin—nay, more, as was said in the euphuistic phraseology of his admirers, send his ball between soul and body without impairing the integrity of either.

But men may do much shooting at candle or bamboo, who would do precious little while another is about to shoot at them. There is a world of difference between looking in a bull's-eye, and looking in the eye of man. A pistol, too, looks far less innocent, regarded through the medium of a yawning muzzle, than the rounded and neatly-polished butt. The huge mouth seems to dilate as you look upon it. You already begin to fancy you behold the leaden mass—the three-ounce bullet—issuing from its stronghold, like a relentless baron of the middle ages, going forth under his grim archway, seeking only whom he may devour. The

sight is apt to diminish the influence of skill. Nerves are necessary to such sportsmen, and nerves become singularly untrue when frowned upon through such a medium.

Under this view of the case, we are not so sure that the excellence of aim for which Alfred Stevens has been so much lauded, will make the difference very material between the parties; and now that he is fairly roused, there is a look of the human devil about William Hinkley, that makes him promise to be dangerous. Nay, the very pistols that he wields, those clumsy, rusty, big-mouthed ante-revolutionary machines, which his stout grandsire carried at Camden and Eutaw, have a look of service about them—a grim, veteran-like aspect, that makes them quite as perilous to face as to handle. If they burst they will blow on all sides. There will be fragments enough for friend and foe; and even though Stevens may not apprehend so much from the aim of his antagonist, something of deference is due to the possibility of such a concussion, as will make up all his deficiencies of skill.

But they have not yet met, though Stevens, with praiseworthy Christianity, is on his way to keep his engagements, as well to mother as to son. He has his own pistols—not made for this purpose—but a substantial pair of traveller's babes—big of mouth, long of throat, thick of jaw, keen of sight, quick of speech, strong of wind, and weighty of argument. They are rifled bores also, and, in the hands of the owner, have done clever things at bottle and sapling. Stevens would prefer to have the legitimate things, but these babes are trustworthy; and he has no reason to suppose that the young rustic whom he goes to meet can produce anything more efficient. He had no idea of those ancient bull-pups, those solemn ante-revolutionary barkers, which our grandsire used upon harder heads than his, at Camden and the Eutaws. He is scarcely so confident in his own weapons when his eye rests on the rusty tools of his enemy.

But it was not destined that this fight should take place without witnesses. In spite of all the precautions of the parties, and they were honest in taking them, our little village had its inklings of what was going on. There were certain signs of commotion and explosion which made themselves understood. Our little maid, Susan Hinkley, was the first, very innocently, to furnish a clue to the mystery. She had complained to her mother that Cousin William had not shot the little guns for her according to his promise.

"But, perhaps, he didn't want to shoot them, Susan."

"Yes, mamma, he put them in his pockets. He's carried them to shoot; and he promised to shoot them for me as soon as I carried the note."

"And to whom did you carry the note, Susan?" asked the mother.

"To the young parson, at Uncle William's."

The mother had not been unobservant of the degree of hostility which her brother, as well as cousin, entertained for Stevens. They had both very freely expressed their dislike in her presence. Some of their conferences had been overheard and were now recalled, in which this expression of dislike had taken the form of threats, vague and purposeless, seemingly, at the time; but which now, taken in connection with what she gathered from the lips of the child, seemed of portentous interest. Then, when she understood that Stevens had sent a note in reply—and that both notes were sealed, the quick, feminine mind instantly jumped to the right conclusion.

"They are surely going to fight. Get my bonnet, Susan, I must run to Uncle William's, and tell him while there's time. Which way did Cousin William go?"

The child could tell her nothing but that he had taken to the hills.

"That brother Ned shouldn't be here now! Though I don't see the good of his being here. He'd only make

matters worse. Run, Susan—run over to Gran'pa Calvert, and tell him to come and stop them from fighting, while I hurry to Uncle William's. Lord save us!—and let me get there in time."

The widow had a great deal more to say, but this was quite enough to bewilder the little girl. Nevertheless, she set forth to convey the mysterious message to Grand'pa Calvert, though the good mother never once reflected that this message was of the sort which assumes the party addressed to be already in possession of the principal facts. While she took one route the mother pursued another, and the two arrived at their respective places at about the same time. Stevens had already left old Hinkley's when the widow got there, and the consternation of Mrs. Hinkley was complete. The old man was sent for to the fields, and came in only to declare that some such persuasion had filled his own mind when first the billet of his son had been received. But the suspicion of the father was of a much harsher sort than that of the widow Hinkley. In her sight it was a duel only—bad enough as a duel—but still only a duel, where the parties incurring equal risks, had equal rights. But the conception of the affair, as it occurred to old Hinkley, was very different.

"Base serpent!" he exclaimed—"he has sent for the good young man only to murder him. He implores him to come to him, in an artful writing, pretending to be sorely sorrowful and full of repentance; and he prepares the weapon of murder to slay him when he comes. Was there ever creature so base!—but I will hunt him out. God give me strength, and grant that I may find him in season."

Thus saying, the old man seized his crab-stick, a knotty club, that had been seasoned in a thousand smokes, and toughened by the use of twenty years. His wife caught up her bonnet and hurried with the widow Hinkley in his train. Meanwhile, by cross-examining the child, Mr. Calvert had formed some plausible conjectures of what was on

foot, and by the time that the formidable procession had reached his neighborhood he was prepared to join it. Events thickened with the increasing numbers. New facts came in to the aid of old ones partially understood. The widow Thackeray, looking from her widow, as young and handsome widows are very much in the habit of doing, had seen William Hinkley going by toward the hill, with a very rapid stride and a countenance very much agitated; and an hour afterward she had seen Brother Stevens following on the same route—good young man!—with the most heavenly and benignant smile upon his countenance—the very personification of the cherub and the seraph, commissioned to subdue the fiend.

“Here is some of your treachery, Mr. Calvert. You have spoiled this boy of mine; turning his head with law studies; and making him disobedient—giving him counsel and encouragement against his father—and filling his mind with evil things. It is all your doing, and your books. And now he’s turned out a bloody murderer, a papist murderer, with your Roman catholic doctrines.”

“I am no Roman catholic, Mr. Hinkley,” was the mild reply—“and as for William becoming a murderer, I think that improbable. I have a better opinion of your son than you have.”

“He’s an ungrateful cub—a varmint of the wilderness—to strike the good young man in my own presence—to strike him with a cowskin—what do you think of that, sir? answer me that, if you please.”

“Did William Hinkley do this?” demanded the old teacher earnestly.

“Ay, that he did, did he!”

“I can hardly understand it. There must have been some grievous provocation?”

“Yes; it was a grievous provocation, indeed, to have to wait for grace before meat.”

“Was that all? can it be possible!”

The mother of the offender supplied the hiatus in the story—and Calvert was somewhat relieved. Though he did not pretend to justify the assault of the youth, he readily saw how he had been maddened by the treatment of his father. He saw that the latter was in a high pitch of religious fury—his prodigious self-esteem taking part with it, naturally enough, against a son, who, until this instance, had never risen in defiance against either. Expostulation and argument were equally vain with him; and ceasing the attempt at persuasion, Calvert hurried on with the rest, being equally anxious to arrest the meditated violence, whether that contemplated the murderous assassination which the father declared, or the less heinous proceeding of the duel which he suspected.

There was one thing which made him tremble for his own confidence in William Hinkley's propriety of course. It was the difficulty which he had with the rest, in believing that the young student of divinity would fight a duel. This doubt, he felt, must be that of his pupil also: whether the latter had any reason to suppose that Stevens would depart from the principles of his profession, and waive the securities which it afforded, he had of course, no means for conjecturing; but his confidence in William induced him to believe that some such impression upon his mind had led him to the measure of sending a challenge, which, otherwise, addressed to a theologian, would have been a shameless mockery.

There was a long running fire, by way of conversation and commentary, which was of course maintained by these toiling pedestrians, cheering the way as they went; but though it made old Hinkley peccant and wrathful, and exercised the vernacular of the rest to very liberal extent, we do not care to distress the reader with it. It may have been very fine or not. It is enough to say that the general tenor of opinion run heavily against our unhappy rustic, and in favor of the good young man, Stevens. Mrs. Thackeray,

the widow, to whom Stevens had paid two visits or more since he had been in the village, and who had her own reasons for doubting that Margaret Cooper had really obtained any advantages in the general struggle to find favor in the sight of this handsome man of God — was loud in her eulogy upon the latter, and equally unsparing in her denunciations of the village lad who meditated so foul a crime as the extinguishing so blessed a light. Her denunciations at length aroused all the mother in Mrs. Hinkley's breast, and the two dames had it, hot and heavy, until, as the parties approached the lake, old Hinkley, with a manner all his own, enjoined the most profound silence, and hushed, without settling the dispute.

Meanwhile, the combatants had met. William Hinkley, having ascended the tallest perch among the hills, beheld his enemy approaching at a natural pace and at a short distance. He descended rapidly to meet him and the parties joined at the foot of the woodland path leading down to the lake, where, but a few days before, we beheld Stevens and Margaret Cooper. Stevens was somewhat surprised to note the singular and imposing change which a day, almost an hour, had wrought in the looks and bearing of the young rustic. His good, and rather elevated command of language, had struck him previously as very remarkable, but this had been explained by his introduction to Mr. Calvert, who, as his teacher, he soon found was very well able to make him what he was. It was the high bearing, the courteous defiance, the superior consciousness of strength and character, which now spoke in the tone and manner of the youth. A choice military school, for years, could scarcely have brought about a more decided expression of that subdued heroism, which makes mere manliness a matter of chivalry, and dignifies brute anger and blind hostility into something like a sentiment. Under the prompting of a good head, a generous temper, and the goodness of a highly-roused, but legitimate state of feeling, William Hink-

ley wore the very appearance of that nobleness, pride, ease, firmness, and courtesy, which, in the conventional world, it is so difficult, yet held to be so important, to impress upon the champion when ready for the field. A genuine son of thunder would have rejoiced in his deportment, and though a sneering, jealous and disparaging temper, Alfred Stevens could not conceal from himself the conviction that there was stuff in the young man which it needed nothing but trial and rough attrition to bring out.

William Hinkley bowed at his approach, and pointed to a close footpath leading to the rocks on the opposite shore.

“There, sir, we shall be more secret. There is a narrow grove above, just suited to our purpose. Will it please you to proceed thither?”

“As *you* please, Mr. Hinkley,” was the reply; “I have no disposition to balk your particular desires. But the sight of this lake reminds me that I owe you my life?”

“I had thought, sir, that the indignity which I put upon you, would cancel all such memories,” was the stern reply.

The cheek of Stevens became crimson — his eye flashed — he felt the sarcasm — but something was due to his position, and he was cool enough to make a concession to circumstances. He answered with tolerable calmness, though not without considerable effort.

“It has cancelled the *obligation*, sir, if not the memory! I certainly can owe you nothing for a life which you have attempted to disgrace—”

“Which I have disgraced!” said the other, interrupting him.

“You are right, sir. How far, however, you have shown your manhood in putting an indignity upon one whose profession implies peace, and denounces war, you are as well prepared to answer as myself.”

“The cloth seems to be of precious thickness!” was the answer of Hinkley, with a smile of bitter and scornful sarcasm.

“If you mean to convey the idea that I do not feel the shame of the blow, and am not determined on avenging it, young man, you are in error. You will find that I am not less determined because I am most cool. I have come out deliberately for the purpose of meeting you. My purpose in reminding you of my profession was simply to undeceive you. It appears to me not impossible that the knowledge of it has made you somewhat bolder than you otherwise might have been.”

“What mean you?” was the stern demand of Hinkley, uttered in very startling accents.

“To tell you that I have not always been a non-combatant, that I am scarcely one now, and that, in the other schools, in which I have been taught, the use of the pistol was an early lesson. You have probably fancied that such was not the case, and that my profession—”

“Come, sir — will you follow this path?” said Hinkley, interrupting him impatiently.

“All in good time, sir, when you have heard me out,” was the cool reply. “Now, sir,” he continued, “were you to have known that it would be no hard task for me to mark any button on your vest, at any distance — that I have often notched a smaller mark, and that I am prepared to do so again, it might be that your prudence would have tempered your courage—”

“I regret for your sake,” said Hinkley, again interrupting him with a sarcasm, “that I have not brought with me the weapon with which *my* marks are made. You seem to have forgotten that I too have some skill in my poor way. One would think, sir, that the memory would not fail of retaining what I suspect will be impressed upon the skin for some time longer.”

“You are evidently bent on fighting, Mr. Hinkley, and I must gratify you!”

“If you please, sir.”

“But, before doing so, I should like to know in what

way I have provoked such a feeling of hostility in your mind? I have not sought to do so. I have on the contrary, striven to show you my friendship, in part requital of the kindness shown me by your parents."

"Do not speak of them, if you please."

"Ay, but I must. It was at the instance of your worthy mother that I sought you and strove to confer with you on the cause of your evident unhappiness."

"You were the cause."

"I?"

"Yes — you! Did I not tell you then that I hated you; and did you not accept my defiance?"

"Yes; but when you saved my life! —"

"It was to spurn you — to put stripes upon you. I tell you, Alfred Stevens, I loathe you with the loathing one feels for a reptile, whose cunning is as detestable as his sting is deadly. I loathe you from instinct. I felt this dislike and distrust for you from the first moment that I saw you. I know not how, or why, or in what manner, you are a villain, but I feel you to be one! I am convinced of it as thoroughly as if I knew it. You have wormed yourself into the bosom of my family. You have expelled me from the affections of my parents; and not content with this, you have stolen to the heart of the woman to whom my life was devoted, to have me driven thence also. Can I do less than hate you? Can I desire less than your destruction? Say, having heard so much, whether you will make it necessary that I should again lay my whip over your shoulders."

The face of Stevens became livid as he listened to this fierce and bitter speech. His eye watched that of the speaker with the glare of the tiger, as if noteful only of the moment when to spring. His frame trembled. His lip quivered with the struggling rage. All his feeling of self-superiority vanished when he listened to language of so unequivocal a character — language which so truly denounced,

without defining, his villany. He felt, that if the instinct of the other was indeed so keen and quick, then was the combat necessary, and the death of the rustic essential, perhaps, to his own safety. William Hinkley met his glance with a like fire. There was no shrinking of his heart or muscles. Nay, unlike his enemy, he felt a strange thrill of pleasure in his veins as he saw the effect which his language had produced on the other.

"Lead the way!" said Stevens; "the sooner you are satisfied the better."

"You are very courteous, and I thank you," replied Hinkley, with a subdued but sarcastic smile, "you will pardon me for the seeming slight, in taking precedence of one so superior; but the case requires it. You will please to follow. I will show you my back no longer than it seems necessary."

"Lead on, sir — lead on."

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNEXPECTED ISSUES.

WILLIAM HINKLEY ascended the narrow path leading to the hills with an alacrity of heart which somewhat surprised himself. The apprehensions of danger, if he felt any, were not of a kind to distress or annoy him, and were more than balanced by the conviction that he had brought his enemy within his level. That feeling of power is indeed a very consolatory one. It satisfies the ambitious heart, though death preys upon his household, one by one; though suffering fevers his sleep; though the hopes of his affection wither; though the loves and ties of his youth decay and vanish. It makes him careless of the sunshine, and heedless of the storm. It deadens his ear to the song of birds, it blinds his eye to the seduction of flowers. It makes him fly from friendship and rush on hate. It compensates for all sorts of loneliness, and it produces them. It is a princely despotism; which, while it robs its slave of freedom, covers him with other gifts which he learns to value more; which, binding him in fetters, makes him believe that they are sceptres and symbols before which all things become what he desires them. His speech is changed, his very nature perverted, but he acquires an "open sesame" by their loss, and the loss seems to his imagination an exceeding gain. We will not say that William Hinkley was altogether satisfied with *his* bargain, but in the moment when he stood confronting his enemy on the bald rock, with a

deadly weapon in each hand—when he felt that he stood foot to foot in equal conflict with his foe, one whom he had dragged down from his pride of place, and had compelled to the fearful issue which made his arrogance quail—in that moment, if he did not forget, he did not so much feel, that he had lost family and friends, parents and love; and if he felt, it was only to induce that keener feeling of revenge in which even the affections are apt to be swallowed up.

Stevens looked in the eye of the young man and saw that he was dangerous. He looked upon the ante-revolutionary pistols, and saw that they were dangerous too, in a double sense.

“Here are pistols,” he said, “better suited to our purpose. You can sound them and take your choice.”

“These,” said Hinkley, doggedly, “are as well suited as any. If you will, you can take your choice of mine; but if you think yours superior, use them. These are good enough for me.”

“But this is out of all usage,” said Stevens.

“What matters it, Mr. Stevens? If you are satisfied that yours are the best, the advantage is with you. If you doubt that mine can kill, try them. I have a faith in these pistols which will content me; but we will take one of each, if that will please you better, and use which we think proper.”

Stevens expressed himself better pleased to keep his own.

“Suit yourself as to distance,” said Hinkley, with all the coolness of an unmixed salamander. His opponent stepped off ten paces with great deliberation, and William Hinkley, moving toward a fragment of the rock upon which he had placed his “revolutions” for the better inspection of his opponent, possessed himself of the veterans and prepared to take the station which had been assigned him.

“Who shall give the word?” demanded Stevens.

“You may!” was the cool rejoinder.

"If I do, I kill you," said the other.

"I have no fear, Mr. Stevens," answered William Hinkley with a degree of phlegm which almost led Stevens to fancy he had to deal with a regular Trojan—"I have no fear," he continued, "and if you fancy you can frighten me by this sort of bragging you have very much mistaken your man. Shoot when you please, word or no word."

William Hinkley stood with his back to the woods, his face toward the lake which spread itself, smooth and calm at a little distance. He did not perceive that his position was a disadvantageous one. The tree behind, and that beside him, rendered his body a most conspicuous mark; while his opponent, standing with his back to the uncovered rocks ranged with no other objects of any prominence. Had he even been sufficiently practised in the arts of the duello, he would most probably have been utterly regardless of these things. They would not have influenced his firmness in the slightest degree. His course was quite as much the result of desperation as philosophy. He felt himself an outcast as well from home as from love, and it mattered to him very little, in the morbid excitement of his present mind, whether he fell by the hand of his rival, or lived to pine out a wearisome existence, lonely and uninspired, a gloomy exile in the bitter world. He waited, it may be said, with some impatience for the fire of his antagonist. Once he saw the pistol of Stevens uplifted. He had one in each hand. His own hung beside him. He waited for the shot of the enemy as a signal when to lift and use his own weapon. But instead of this he was surprised to see him drop the muzzle of his weapon, and with some celerity and no small degree of slight of hand, thrust the two pistols under his coat-skirts. A buz reached his ears a moment after—the hum of voices—some rustling in the bushes, which signified confusion in the approach of strangers. He did not wish to look round as he preferred keeping his eye on his antagonist.

“Shoot !” he exclaimed — “quickly, before we are interrupted.”

Before he could receive any answer there was a rush behind him — he heard his father’s voice, sudden, and in a high degree of fury, mingled with that of his mother and Mr. Calvert, as if in expostulation. From the latter the words distinctly reached his ears, warning him to beware. Such, also, was the purport of his mother’s cry. Before he could turn and guard against the unseen danger, he received a blow upon his head, the only thing of which he was conscious for some time. He staggered and fell forward. He felt himself stunned, fancied he was shot, and sunk to the ground in an utter state of insensibility.

The blow came from his father’s crab-stick. It was so utterly unexpected by the parties who had attended old Hinkley to the place of meeting, that no efforts were made to prevent it. But the mother of the victim rushed in in time to defeat the second blow, which the father prepared to inflict, in the moment when his son was falling from the effects of the first. Grasping the coat skirts of her spouse, she pulled him back with no scrupulous hand, and effectually baffled his designs by bringing him down, though in an opposite direction, to the same level with the youth. Old Hinkley did not bite the dust, but the latter part of his skull most effectually butted it ; and had not his head been quite as tough as his crab-stick, the hurt might have been quite as severe as that which the latter had inflicted on the son.

The latter lay as perfectly quiet as if all had been over with him. So much so, that the impression became very general that such was the case. Under this impression the heart of the mother spoke out in mingled screams of lamentation and reproach. She threw herself down by the side of the youth and vainly attempted to stop the blood which was streaming from a deep gash on his skull. While engaged in this work, her apron and handkerchief being

both employed for this purpose, she poured forth a torrent of wrath and denunciation against her spouse. She now forgot all the offences of the boy, and even Alfred Stevens came in for his share of the anger with which she visited the offence and the offender.

“Shame! shame! you bloody-minded man,” she cried, “to slaughter your own son — your only son — to come behind him and knock him down with a club as if he had been an inhuman ox! You are no husband of mine. He sha’n’t own you for a father. If I had the pick, I’d choose a thousand fathers for him, from here to Mississippi, sooner than you. He’s only too good and too handsome to be son of yours. And for what should you strike him? For a stranger — a man we never saw before. Shame on you! You are a brute, a monster, William Hinkley, and I’m done with you for ever.

“My poor, poor boy! Look up, my son. Look up, William. Open your eyes. It’s your own dear mother that speaks to you. O my God! you’ve killed him — he will not open his eyes. He’s dead, he’s dead, he’s dead!”

And truly it seemed so, for the youth gave no sign of consciousness. She threw herself in a screaming agony upon his body, and gave herself up to the unmeasured despair, which, if a weakness, is at least a sacred one in the case of a mother mourning her only son. Old Hinkley was not without his alarms — nay, not altogether without his compunctions. But he was one of that round head *genus* whose self-esteem is too much at all times for fear, or shame, or sensibility. Without seeking to assist the lad, and ascertain what was his real condition, he sought only to justify himself for what he had done by repeating the real and supposed offences of the youth. He addressed himself in this labor chiefly to Mr. Calvert, who, with quite as much suffering as any of the rest, had more consideration, and was now busied in the endeavor to stanch the blood and cleanse the wound of the victim.

"He's only got what he deserved," exclaimed the sullen, stubborn father.

"Do not speak so, Mr. Hinkley," replied Calvert, with a sternness which was unusual with him; "your son may have got his death."

"And he deserves it!" responded the other doggedly.

"And if he has," continued Calvert, "you are a murderer—a cold-blooded murderer—and as such will merit and will meet the halter."

The face of the old man grew livid—his lips whitened with rage; and he approached Calvert, his whole frame quivering with fury, and, shaking his hand threateningly, exclaimed:—

"Do you dare to speak to me in this manner, you miserable, white-headed pedagogue—do you dare?"

"Dare!" retorted Calvert, rising to his feet with a look of majesty which, in an instant, awed the insolence of the offender. Never had he been faced by such defiance, so fearlessly and nobly expressed.

"Dare!—Look on me, and ask yourself whether I dare or not. Approach me but a step nigher, and even my love for your unfortunate and much-abused but well-minded son will not protect you. I would chastise you, with all my years upon me, in spite of my white head. Yours, if this boy should die, will never become white, or will become so suddenly, as your soul will wither, with its own self-torture, within you. Begone!—keep back—do not approach me, and, above all, do not approach me with uplifted hand, or, by Heaven, I will fell you to the earth as surely as you felled this boy! You have roused a feeling within me, William Hinkley, which has slept for years. Do not provoke it too far. Beware in season. You have acted the brute and the coward to your son—you could do so with impunity to him—to me you can not."

There was something in this speech, from one whom old Hinkley was accustomed to look upon as a dreaming book-

worm, which goaded the tyrannical father into irrepressible fury ; and, grinding his teeth, without a moment's hesitation he advanced, and was actually about to lay the crab-stick over the shoulders of the speaker : but the latter was as prompt as he was fearless. Before Hinkley could conceive his intention, he had leaped over the still unconscious person of William, and, flinging the old man round with a sudden jerk, had grasped and wrested the stick from his hands with a degree of activity and strength which confounded all the bystanders, and the subject of his sudden exercise of manhood no less than the rest.

"Were you treated justly," said Calvert, regarding him with a look of the loftiest indignation, "you should yourself receive a taste of the cudgel you are so free to use on others. Let your feebleness, old man, be a warning to your arrogance."

With these words, he flung the crab-stick into the lake, old Hinkley regarding him with looks in which it was difficult to say whether mortification or fury had preponderance.

"Go," he continued—"your son lives ; but it is God's mercy, and none of yours, which has spared his life. You will live, I hope, to repent of your cruelty and injustice to him ; to repent of having shown a preference to a stranger, so blind as that which has moved you to attempt the life of one of the most gentle lads in the whole country."

"And did he not come here to murder the stranger ? did we not find him even now with pistol ready to murder Brother Stevens ? See the pistols now in his hands—my father's pistols. We came not a minute too soon. But for my blow, he had been a murderer."

Such was the justification which old Hinkley now offered for what he had done.

"I am no advocate for duelling," said Calvert, "but I believe that your son came with the stranger for this purpose, and not to murder him."

"No, no! do you not see that Brother Stevens has no pistols? Did we not see him trying to escape—walking off—walking almost over the rocks to get out of the way?"

Calvert comprehended the matter much more clearly.

"Speak, sir!" he said to Stevens, "did you not come prepared to defend yourself?"

"You see me as I am," said Stevens, showing his empty hands.

Calvert looked at him with searching eye.

"I understand you, sir," he said, with an expression not to be mistaken; "I understand you now. *This lad I know. He could not be a murderer. He could not take any man at advantage.* If you do not know the fact, Mr. Stevens, I can assure you that your life was perfectly secure from his weapon, so long as his remained equally unendangered. The sight of that lake, from which he rescued you but a few days ago, should sufficiently have persuaded you of this."

Stevens muttered something, the purport of which was, that "he did not believe the young man intended to murder him."

"Did he not send you a challenge?"

"No!" said old Hinkley; "he sent him a begging note, promising atonement and repentance."

"Will you let me see that note?" said Calvert, addressing Stevens.

"I have it not—I destroyed it," said Stevens with some haste. Calvert said no more, but he looked plainly enough his suspicions. He now gave his attention to William Hinkley, whose mother, while this scene was in progress, had been occupied, as Calvert had begun, in stanching the blood, and trimming with her scissors, which were fortunately at her girdle, the hair from the wound. The son, meanwhile, had wakened to consciousness. He had been stunned but not severely injured by the blow, and, with the promptitude of a border-dame, Mrs. Hinkley, hurrying to a pine-tree, had gathered enough of its resin, which, spread

upon a fragment of her cotton apron, and applied to the hurt, proved a very fair substitute for adhesive plaster. The youth rose to his feet, still retaining the pistols in his grasp. His looks were heavy from the stupor which still continued, but kindled into instant intelligence when he caught sight of Stevens and his father.

"Go home, sir!" said the latter, waving his hand in the prescribed direction.

"Never!" was the reply of the young man, firmly expressed; "never, sir, if I never have a home!"

"You shall always have a home, William, while I have one," said Mr. Calvert.

"What! you encourage my son in rebellion? you teach him to fly in the face of his father?" shouted the old man.

"No, sir; I only offer him a shelter from tyranny, a place of refuge from persecution. When you learn the duties and the feelings of a father, it will be time enough to assert the rights of one. I do not think him safe in your house against your vindictiveness and brutality. He is, however, of full age, and can determine for himself."

"He is not of age, and will not be till July."

"It matters not. He is more near the years of discretion than his father; and, judging him to be in some danger in your house, as a man and as a magistrate I offer him the protection of mine. Come home with me, William."

"Let him go, if he pleases—go to the d—l! He who honors not his father, says the Scriptures—what says the passage, Brother Stevens—does it not say that he who honors not his father is in danger of hell-fire?"

"Not exactly, I believe," said the other.

"Matters not, matters not!—the meaning is very much the same."

"Oh, my son," said the mother, clinging to his neck, "will you, indeed, desert me? can you leave me in my old age? I have none, none but you! You know how I have loved—you know I will always love you."

“And I love you, mother—and love him too, though he treats me as an outcast—I will always love you, but I will never more enter my father’s dwelling. He has degraded me with his whip—he has attempted my life with his bludgeon. I forgive him, but will never expose myself again to his cruelties or indignities. You will always find me a son, and a dutiful one, in all other respects.”

He turned away with Mr. Calvert, and slowly proceeded down the pathway by which he had approached the eminence. He gave Stevens a significant look as he passed him, and lifted one of the pistols which he still carried in his hands, in a manner to make evident his meaning. The other smiled and turned off with the group, who proceeded by the route along the hills, but the last words of the mother, subdued by sobs, still came to the ears of the youth:—

“Oh, my son, come home! come home!”

“No! no! I have no home—no home, mother!” muttered the young man, as if he thought the half-stifled response could reach the ears of the complaining woman.

“No home! no hope!” he continued—“I am desolate.”

“Not so, my son. God is our home; God is our companion; our strength, our preserver! Living and loving, manfully striving and working out our toils for deliverance, we are neither homeless, nor hopeless; neither strengthless, nor fatherless; wanting neither in substance nor companion. This is a sharp lesson, perhaps, but a necessary one. It will give you that courage, of the great value of which I spoke to you but a few days ago. Come with me to my home; it shall be yours until you can find a better.”

“I thank you—oh! how much I thank you. It may be all as you say, but I feel very, very miserable.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

EXILE.

THE artist in the moral world must be very careful not to suffer his nice sense of retributive justice, to get so much the better of his judgment, as an artist, as to make him forgetful of human probabilities, and the superior duty of preparing the mind of the young reader by sterling examples of patience and protracted reward, to bear up manfully against injustice, and not to despond because his rewards are slow. It would be very easy for an author to make everybody good, or, if any were bad, to dismiss them, out of hand, to purgatory and places even worse. But it would be a thankless toil to read the writings of such an author. His characters would fail in *vraisemblance*, and his incidents would lack in interest. The world is a sort of vast moral lazar-house, in which most have sores, either of greater or less degree of virulence. Some are nurses, and doctors, and guardians; and these are necessarily free from the diseases to which they minister. Some, though not many, are entirely incurable; many labor for years in pain, and when dismissed, still hobble along feebly, bearing the proofs of their trials in ugly seams and blotches, contracted limbs, and pale, haggard features. Others get off with a shorter and less severe probation. None are free from taint, and those who are the most free, are not always the greatest favorites with fortune.

We are speaking of the moral world, good reader. We simply borrow an illustration from the physical. Our interest in one another is very much derived from our knowledge of each other's infirmities; and it may be remarked, passingly, that this interest is productive of very excellent philosophical temper, since it enables us to bear the worst misfortunes of our best friends with the most amazing fortitude. It is a frequent error with the reader of a book—losing sight of these facts—to expect that justice will always be done on the instant. He will suffer no delay in the book, though he sees that this delay of justice is one of the most decided of all the moral certainties whether in life or law. He does not wish to see the person in whom the author makes him interested, perish in youth—die of broken heart or more rapid disaster; and if he could be permitted to interfere, the bullet or the knife of the assassin would be arrested at the proper moment and always turned against the bosom of the wrong-doer.

This is a very commendable state of feeling, and whenever it occurs, it clearly shows that the author is going right in his vocation. It proves him to be a *human* author, which is something better than being a mere, dry, moral one. But he would neither be a human nor a moral author were he to comply with the desires of such gentle readers, and, to satisfy their sympathies, arrest the progress of events. The fates must have their way, in the book as in the lazar-house; and the persons of his drama must endure their sores and sufferings with what philosophy they may, until, under the hands of that great physician, fortune, they receive an honorable discharge or otherwise.

Were it with him, our young friend, William Hinkley, who is really a clever fellow, should not only be received to favor with all parties, but such should never have fallen from favor in the minds of any. His father should become soon repentant, and having convicted Stevens of his falsehood and hypocrisy, he should be rewarded with the hand of the

woman to whom his young heart is so devoted. Such, perhaps, would be the universal wish with our readers; but would this be fortunate for William Hinkley? Our venerable friend and his, Mr. Calvert, has a very different opinion. He says:—

“This young man is not only a worthy young man, but he is one, naturally of very vigorous intellect. He is of earnest, impassioned temperament, full of enthusiasm and imagination; fitted for work—great work—public work—head work—the noblest kind of work. He will be a great lawyer—perhaps a great statesman—if he addresses himself at once, manfully, to his tasks; but he will not address himself to these tasks while he pursues the rusting and mind-destroying life of a country village. Give him the object of his present desire and you deprive him of all motive for exertion. Give him the woman he seeks and you probably deprive him even of the degree of quiet which the country village affords. He would forfeit happiness without finding strength. Force him to the use of his tools and he builds himself fame and fortune.”

Calvert was really not sorry that William Hinkley's treatment had been so harsh. He sympathized, it is true, in his sufferings, but he was not blind to their probable advantages; and he positively rejoiced in his rejection by Margaret Cooper.

It was some four or five days after the events with which our last chapter was closed, that the old man and his young friend were to be seen sitting together, under the shade of the venerable tree where we have met them before. They had conferred together seriously, and finally with agreeing minds, on the several topics which have been adverted to in the preceding paragraph. William Hinkley had become convinced that it was equally the policy of his mind and heart to leave Charlemont. He was not so well satisfied, however, as was the case with Mr. Calvert, that the loss of Margaret Cooper was his exceeding gain. When did

young lover come to such a conclusion? Not, certainly, while he was young. But when was young lover wise? Though a discontent, William Hinkley was not, however, soured nor despairing from the denial of his hopes. He had resources of thought and spirit never tested before, of the possession of which he, himself, knew nothing. They were to be brought into use and made valuable only by these very denials; by the baffling of his hope; by the provocation of his strength.

His resolution grew rapidly in consequence of his disappointments. He was now prepared to meet the wishes of his venerable and wise preceptor—to grapple stoutly with the masters of the law; and, keeping his heart in restraint, if not absolute abeyance, to do that justice to his head, which, according to the opinion of Mr. Calvert, it well-deserved if hitherto it had not demanded it. But to pursue his studies as well as his practice, he was to leave Charlemont. How was this to be done—where was he to go—by what means? A horse, saddle, and bridle—a few books and the ante-revolutionary pistols of his grandsire, which recent circumstances seemed to have endeared to him, were all his available property. His poverty was an estoppel, at the outset, to his own reflections; and thinking of this difficulty he turned with a blank visage to his friend.

The old man seemed to enter into and imagine his thoughts. He did not wait to be reminded, by the halting speech of the youth, of the one subject from which the latter shrunk to speak.

“The next thing, my son,” said he, “is the necessary means. Happily, in the case of one so prudent and temperate as yourself, you will not need much. Food and clothing, and a small sum, annually, for contingencies, will be your chief expense; and this, I am fortunately able to provide. I am not a rich man, my son; but economy and temperance, with industry, have given me enough, and to

spare. It is long since I had resolved that all I have should be yours; and I had laid aside small sums from time to time, intending them for an occasion like the present, which I felt sure would at length arrive. I am rejoiced that my foresight should have begun in time, since it enables me to meet the necessity promptly, and to interpose myself at the moment when you most need counsel and assistance."

"Oh, my friend, my kind generous friend, how it shames me for my own father to hear you speak thus!"

The youth caught the hands of his benefactor, and the hot tears fell from his eyes upon them, while he fervently bent to kiss them.

"Your father is a good but rough man, William, who will come to his senses in good time. Men of his education—governed as he is by the mistake which so commonly confounds God with his self-constituted representative, religion with its professor—will err, and can not be reasoned out of their errors. It is the unceasing operation of time which can alone teach them a knowledge of the truth. You must not think too hardly of your father, who does not love you the less because he fancies you are his particular property, with whom he may do what he pleases. As for what I have done, and am disposed to do for you, let that not become burdensome to your gratitude. In some respects you have been a son to me, and I send you from me with the same reluctance which a father would feel in the like circumstances. You have been my companion, you have helped to cheer my solitude; and I have learned to look on the progress of your mind with the interest of the philosopher who pursues a favorite experiment. In educating you, I have attempted an experiment which I should be sorry to see fail. I do not think now that it will fail. I think you will do yourself and me ample justice. If I have had my doubts, they were of your courage, not your talent. If you have a weakness, it is because of a defi-

ciency of self-esteem—a tendency to self-disparagement. A little more actual struggle with the world, and an utter withdrawal from those helps and hands which in a youth's own home are very apt to be constantly employed to keep him from falling, and to save him from the consequences of his fall, and I do not despair of seeing you acquire that necessary moral hardihood which will enable you to think freely, and to make your mind give a fair utterance to the properties which are in it. When this is done, I have every hope of you. You will rise to eminence in your profession. I know, my son, that you will do me honor."

"Ah, sir, I am afraid you overrate my abilities. I have no consciousness of any such resources as you suppose me to possess."

"It is here that your deficiency speaks out. Be bold, my son—be bold, bolder, boldest. I would not have you presumptuous, but there is a courage, short of presumption, which is only a just confidence in one's energies and moral determination. This you will soon form, if, looking around you and into the performances of others, you see how easy they are, and how far inferior they are to your own ideas of what excellence should be. Do not look into yourself for your standards. I have perhaps erred in making these too high. Look out from yourself—look into others—analyze the properties of others; and, in attempting, seek only to meet the exigencies of the occasion, without asking what a great mind might effect beyond it. Your heart will fail you always if your *beau ideal* is for ever present to your mind."

"I will try, sir. My tasks are before me, and I know it is full time that I should discard my boyhood. I will go to work with industry, and will endeavor not to disappoint your confidence; but I must confess, sir, I have very little in myself."

"If you will work seriously, William, my faith is in this very humility. A man knowing his own weakness, and-work-

ing to be strong, can not fail. He must achieve something more than he strives for."

"You make me strong as I hear you, sir. But I have one request to make, sir. I have a favor to ask, sir, which will make me almost happy if you grant it—which will at least reconcile me to receive your favors, and to feel them less oppressively."

"What is that, William? You know, my son, there are few things which I could refuse you."

"It is that *I may be your son*; that I may call you father, and bear henceforward your name. If you adopt me, rear me, teach me, provide me with the means of education and life, and do for me what a father should have done, you are substantially more than my father to me. Let me bear your name. I shall be proud of it, sir. I will not disgrace it—nay, more, it will strengthen me in my desire to do it and myself honor. When I hear it spoken, it will remind me of my equal obligations to you and to myself."

"But this, my son, is a wrong done to your own father."

"Alas! he will not feel it such."

The old man shook his head.

"You speak now with a feeling of anger, William. The treatment of your father rankles in your mind."

"No, sir, no! I freely forgive him. I have no reference to him in the prayer I make. My purpose is simply what I declare. Your name will remind me of your counsels, will increase my obligation to pursue them, will strengthen me in my determination, will be to me a fond monitor in your place. Oh, sir, do not deny me! You have shown me the affections of a father—let me, I entreat you, bear the name of your son!"

The youth flung his arms about the old man's neck, and wept with a gush of fondness which the venerable sire could not withstand. He was deeply touched: his lips quivered;

his eyes thrilled and throbbed. In vain did he strive to resist the impulse. He gave him tear for tear.

“My son, you have unmanned me.”

“Ah, my father, I can not regret, since, in doing so, I have strengthened my own manhood.”

“If it have this effect, William, I shall not regret my own weakness. There is a bird, you are aware, of which it is fabled that it nourishes its young by the blood of its own bosom, which it wounds for this purpose. Believe me, my dear boy, I am not unwilling to be this bird for your sake. If to feel for you as the fondest of fathers can give me the rights of one, then are you most certainly my son—my son!”

Long, and fond, and sweet, was their embrace. For a full hour, but few words, and those of a mournful tenderness, were exchanged between the parties. But the scene and the struggle were drawing nigh their close. This was the day when they were to separate. It had been arranged that William Hinkley, or as he now calls himself, William Calvert, was to go into the world. The old man had recalled for his sake, many of the memories and associations of his youth. He had revived that period—in his case one of equal bitterness and pleasure—when, a youth like him he was about to send forth, he had been the ardent student in a profession whose honors he had so sadly failed to reap. In this profession he was then fortunate in having many sterling friends. Some of these were still so. In withdrawing from society, he had not withdrawn from all commerce with a select and sacred few; and to the friendly counsel and protection of these he now deputed the paternal trusts which had been just so solemnly surrendered to himself. There were long and earnest appeals written to many noble associates—men who had won great names by dint of honorable struggle in those fields into which the feebler temper of Mr. Calvert did not permit him to penetrate. Some of these letters bore for their superscriptions

such names as the Clays, the Crittendens, and the Metcalfs—the strong men, not merely of Kentucky, but of the Union. The good old man sighed as he read them over, separately, to his young companion.

“Once I stood with them, and like them—not the meanest among them—nay, beloved by them as an associate, and recognised as a competitor. But they are here—strong, high, glorious, in the eye of the nation—and I am nothing—a poor white-headed pedagogue in the obscurest regions of Kentucky. Oh, my son, remember this, and be strong! Beware of that weakness, the offspring of a miserable vanity, which, claiming too much for itself, can bestow nothing upon others. Strive only to meet the exigency, and you will do more—you will pass beyond it. Ask not what your fame requires—the poor fame of a solitary man struggling like an atom in the bosom of the great struggling world—ask only what is due to the task which you have assumed, and labor to do that. This is the simple, small secret, but be sure it is the one which is of more importance than all beside.”

The departure of William Hinkley from his native village was kept a profound secret from all persons except his adopted father and his bosom friend and cousin, Fisherman Ned. We have lost sight of this young man for several pages, and, in justice equally to the reader and himself, it is necessary that we should hurriedly retrace our progress, at least so far as concerns him. We left him, if we remember, having driven Alfred Stevens from his purpose, riding on alone, really with no other aim than to give circulation to his limbs and fancies. His ride, if we are to believe his random but significant words, and his very knowing looks, was not without its results. He had certainly made some discoveries—at least he thought and said so; but, in truth, we believe these amounted to nothing more than some plausible conjectures as to the route which Alfred Stevens was in the habit of pursuing, on those excursions, in which the

neighbors were disposed to think that there was something very mysterious. He certainly had jumped to the conclusion that, on such occasions, the journey of Stevens was prolonged to Ellisland; and, as such a ride was too long for one of mere pleasure and exercise, the next conclusion was, that such a journey had always some business in it.

Now, a business that calls for so much secrecy, in a young student of theology, was certainly one that could have very little relation to the church. So far as Ned Hinkley knew anything of the Decalogue it could not well relate to that. There was nothing in St. Paul that required him to travel post to Ellisland; though a voyage to Tarsus might be justified by the authority of that apostle; and the whole proceeding, therefore, appeared to be a mystery in which gossiping had very little to do. Very naturally, having arrived at this conclusion, Ned Hinkley jumped to another. If the saints have nothing to do with this journey of Alfred Stevens, the sinners must have. It meant mischief—it was a device of Satan; and the matter seemed so clearly made out to his own mind, that he returned home with the further conviction, which was equally natural and far more easily arrived at, that he was now bound by religion, as he had previously been impelled by instinct, to give Stevens “a regular licking the very first chance that offered.” Still, though determined on this measure, he was not unmindful of the necessity of making other discoveries; and he returned to Charlemont with a countenance big with importance and almost black with mystery.

But the events which had taken place in his absence, and which we have already related, almost put his own peculiar purposes out of his mind. That William Hinkley should have cowskinned Stevens would have been much more gratifying to him could he have been present; and he was almost disposed to join with the rest in their outcry against this sacrilegious proceeding, for the simple reason, that it

somewhat anticipated his own rigorous intentions to the same effect. He was not less dissatisfied with the next attempt for two reasons.

“You might have known, Bill, that a parson won’t fight with pistols. You might have persuaded him to fist or cudgel, to a fair up and down, hand over, fight! That’s not so criminal, they think. I heard once of Brother John Cross, himself trying a cudgel bout with another parson down in Mississippi, because he took the same text out of his mouth, and preached it over the very same day, with contrary reason. Everybody said that John Cross served him right, and nobody blamed either. But they would have done so if pistols had been used. You can’t expect parsons or students of religion to fight with firearms. Swords, now, they think justifiable, for St. Peter used them; but we read nowhere in Old or New Testament of their using guns, pistols, or rifles.”

“But he consented to fight, and brought his own pistols, Ned?”

“Why, then, didn’t you fight? That’s the next thing I blame you for—that, when you were both ready, and had the puppies in your hands, you should have stood looking at each other without taking a crack. By jingo, had there been fifty fathers and mothers in the bush, I’d have had a crack at him. No, I blame you, William—I can’t help it. You didn’t do right. Oh! if you had only waited for me, and let me have fixed it, how finely we would have managed. What then, if your father had burst in, it was only shifting the barkers from your hands to mine. I’d have banged at him, though John Cross himself, and all his flock, stood by and kneed it to prevent me. They might have prayed to all eternity without stopping me, I tell you.”

William Hinkley muttered something about the more impressive sort of procedure which his father had resorted to, and a little soreness about the parietal bones just at that moment giving a quick impatient air to his manner, had

the effect of putting an end to all further discussion of this topic. Fisherman Ned concluded with a brief assurance, meant as consolation, that, when he took up the cudgels, his cousin need make himself perfectly easy with the conviction that he would balance both accounts very effectually. He had previously exhorted William to renew the attempt, though with different weapons, to bring his enemy into the field; but against this attempt Mr. Calvert had already impressively enjoined him; exacting from him a promise that he would not seek Stevens, and would simply abide any call for satisfaction which the latter might make. The worthy old man was well assured that in Stevens's situation there was very little likelihood of a summons to the field from him.

Still, William Hinkley did not deem it becoming in him to leave the ground for several days, even after his preparations for departure were complete. He loitered in the neighborhood, showed himself frequently to his enemy, and, on some of these occasions, was subjected to the mortification of beholding the latter on his way to the house of Margaret Cooper, with whom, a few moments after, he might be seen in lonely rambles by the lake-side and in the wood. William had conquered his hopes from this quarter, but he vainly endeavored to suppress his pangs.

At length the morning came for his departure. He had seen his mother for the last time the night before. They had met at the house of the widow Hinkley, between which and that of Calvert, his time had been chiefly spent, since the day of his affair with Stevens. His determination to depart was carefully concealed from his mother. He dreaded to hear her entreaties, and he doubted his own strength to endure them. His deportment, however, was sufficiently fond and tender, full of pain and passion, to have convinced her, had she been at all suspicious of the truth, of the design he meditated. But, as it was, it simply satisfied her affections; and the fond "good night" with which he ad-

dressed her ears at parting, was followed by a gush of tears which shocked the more sturdy courage of his cousin, and aroused the suspicions of the widow.

"William Hinkley," she said after the mother had gone home—"you must be thinking to leave Charlemont. I'm sure of it—I know it."

"If you do, say nothing, dear cousin; it will do no good—it can not prevent me now, and will only make our parting more painful."

"Oh, don't fear me," said the widow—"I shan't speak of it, till it's known to everybody, for I think you right to go and do just as Gran'pa Calvert tells you; but you needn't have made it such a secret with me. I've always been too much of your friend to say a word."

"Alas!" said the youth mournfully, "until lately, dear cousin, I fancied that I had no friends—do not blame me, therefore, if I still sometimes act as if I had none."

"You have many friends, William, already—I'm sure you will find many more wherever you go; abler friends if not fonder ones, than you leave behind you."

The youth threw his arms round the widow's neck and kissed her tenderly. Her words sounded in his ears like some melodious prophecy.

"Say no more, cousin," he exclaimed with sudden enthusiasm; "I am so well pleased to believe what you promise me of the future, that I am willing to believe all. God bless you. I will never forget you."

The parting with Calvert was more touching in reality, but with fewer of the external signs of feeling. A few words, a single embrace and squeeze of the hand, and they separated; the old man hiding himself and his feelings in the dimness of his secluded abode, while his adopted son, with whom Ned Hinkley rode a brief distance on his way, struck spurs into his steed, as if to lose, in the rapid motion of the animal, the slow, sad feelings which were pressing

heavily upon his heart. He had left Charlemont for ever. He had left it under circumstances of doubt, and despondency—stung by injustice, and baffled in the first ardent hopes of his youthful mind. “The world was all before him, where to choose.” Let us not doubt that the benignant Providence is still his guide.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONQUEST.

THE progress of events and our story necessarily brings us back to Charlemont. We shall lose sight of William Hinkley, henceforth Calvert, for some time ; and here, *par parenthese*, let us say to our readers, that this story being drawn from veritable life, will lack some of that compactness and close fitness of parts which make our novels too much resemble the course of a common law case. Instead of having our characters always at hand, at the proper moment, to do the business of the artist, like so many puppets, each working on a convenient wire, and waiting to be whistled in upon the scene, we shall find them sometimes absent, as we do in real life when their presence is most seriously desired, and when the reader would perhaps prefer that they should come in, to meet or make emergencies. Some are gone whom we should rather see ; some present, whose absence, in the language of the Irishman, would be the best company they could give us ; and some, not forthcoming, like the spirits of Owen Glendower, even when most stoutly called for. The vast deeps of human progress do not release their tenants at the beck and call of ordinary magicians, and we, who endeavor to describe events as we find them, must be content to take them and persons, too, only when they are willing. Were we writing the dramatic romance, we should be required to keep William Hinkley always at hand, as a convenient foil to Alfred Stevens. He

should watch his progress ; pursue his sinuosities of course ; trace him out in all his ill-favored purposes, and be ready, at the first act—having, like the falcon, by frequent and constantly-ascending gyrations, reached the point of command—to pounce down upon the fated quarry, and end the story and the strife together. But ours is a social narrative, where people come and go without much regard to the unities, and without asking leave of the manager. William Hinkley, too, is a mere man and no hero. He has no time to spare, and he is conscious that he has already wasted too much. He has work to do and is gone to do it. Let it console the reader, in his absence, to know that he *will* do it—that his promise is a good one—and that we have already been shown, in the dim perspective of the future, glimpses of his course which compensate him for his mishaps, and gladden the heart of his adopted father, by confirming its prophecies and hopes.

The same fates which deny that he should realize the first fancies of his boyhood, are, in the end, perhaps, not a jot kinder to others whom they now rather seem to favor. His absence did not stop the social machine of Charlemont from travelling on very much as before. There was a shadow over his mother's heart, and his disappearance rather aroused some misgiving and self-reproachful sensations in that of his father. Mr. Calvert, too, had his touch of hypochondria in consequence of his increased loneliness, and Ned Hinkley's fighting monomania underwent startling increase ; but, with the rest, the wheel went on without much sensible difference. The truth is, that, however mortifying the truth may be, the best of us makes but a very small sensation in his absence. Death is a longer absence, in which our friends either forget us, or recollect our vices. Our virtues are best acknowledged when we are standing nigh and ready to enforce them. Like the argumentative eloquence of the Eighth Harry, they are never effectual until the halberdiers clinch their rivets forcibly.

It does not necessarily impugn the benevolence or wisdom of Providence to show that crime is successful for a season in its purposes. Vice may prevail, and victims perish, without necessarily disparaging the career, or impeding the progress of virtue. To show that innocence may fall, is sometimes to strengthen innocence, so that it may stand against all assailants. To show vice, even in its moments of success, is not necessarily to show that such success is desirable. Far from it! As none of us can look very deeply into the future, so it happens that the boon for which we pray sometimes turns out to be our bane; while the hardship and suffering, whose approach we deprecate in sackcloth and ashes, may come with healing on their wings, and afford us a dearer blessing than any ever yet depicted in the loom of a sanguine and brilliant imagination.

We are, after all, humbling as this fact may be to our clamorous vanity, only so many agents and instruments, blind, and scuffling vainly in our blindness, in the perpetual law of progress. As a soul never dies, so it is never useless or unemployed. The Deity is no more profligate in the matter of souls than he is in that of seeds. They pass, by periodical transitions, from body to body; perhaps from sphere to sphere; and as the performance of their trusts have been praiseworthy or censurable, so will be the character of their trusts in future. He who has shown himself worthy of confidence in one state, will probably acquire a corresponding increase of responsibility in another. He who has betrayed his trusts or impaired them, will share less of the privileges of the great moral credit system.

In all these transitions, however, work is to be done. The fact that there is a trust, implies duty and performance; and the practice of virtue is nothing more than the performance of this work to the best of our abilities. Well, we do not do our work. We fail in our trusts. We abuse them. Such a man as Alfred Stevens abuses them. Such a woman as Margaret Cooper fails in them. What then?

Do we destroy the slave who fails in his duty, or chasten him, and give him inferior trusts? Do you suppose that the Deity is more profligate in souls than in seeds—that he creates and sends forth millions of new souls, annually, in place of those which have gone astray? Hardly so! He is too good an economist for that. We learn this from all the analogies. As a soul can not perish, so it never remains unemployed. It still works, though its labors may be confined to a treadmill.

The mere novel-reader may regard all this as so much unnecessary digression. But let him not deceive himself. It would be the most humiliating and painful thought, indeed, could we believe that the genius which informs and delights us—which guides the bark of state through a thousand storms and dangers to its port of safety—which conquers and commands—which sings in melodies that make melodies in human hearts for thousands of succeeding years—is suddenly to be suspended—to have no more employment—to do no more work—guide no more states—make no more melodies! Nay, the pang would be scarcely less to believe that a fair intellect like that of Alfred Stevens, or a wild, irregular genius, like that of Margaret Cooper—because of its erring, either through perversity or blindness, is wholly to become defunct, so far as employment is concerned—that they are to be deprived of all privilege of working up to the lost places—regaining the squandered talents—atoning, by industry and humble desire, the errors and deficiencies of the past! We rather believe that heaven is a world where the labors are more elevated, the necessities less degrading; that it is no more permanent than what we esteem present life; nay, that it is destined to other transitions; that we may still ascend, on and on, and that each heaven has its higher heaven yet. We believe that our immortality is from the beginning; that time is only a periodical step in eternity—that transition is the true meaning of life—and death nothing more

than a sign of progress. It may be an upward or a downward progress, but it is not a toilsome march to a mere sleep. Lavish as is the bounty of God, and boundless as are his resources, there is nothing of him that we do know which can justify the idea of such utter profligacy of material.

We transgress. Our business is with the present doings of our dramatis personæ and not with the future employment of their souls. Still, we believe, the doctrine which we teach not only to be more rational, but absolutely more moral than the conjectures on this subject which are in ordinary use. More rational as relates to the characteristics of the Deity, and more moral as it affects the conduct and the purposes of man himself. There is something grand beyond all things else, in the conception of this eternal progress of the individual nature; its passage from condition to condition; sphere to sphere; life to life; always busy, working for the mighty Master; falling and sinking to mere menial toils, or achieving and rising to more noble trusts; but, at all events, still working in some way in the great world-plantation, and under the direct eye of the sovereign World-Planter. The torture of souls on the one hand, and the singing of psalms on the other, may be doctrines infinitely more orthodox; but, to our mind, they seem immeasurably inferior in grandeur, in propriety, in noble conception of the appointments of the creature, and the wondrous and lovely designs of the benignant Father.

The defeat of such a soul as that of Margaret Cooper, can surely be a temporary defeat only. It will regain strength, it must rise in the future, it must recover the lost ground, and reassert the empire whose sway it has unwillingly abandoned; for it is not through will, wholly, by which we lose the moral eminence. Something is due to human weaknesses; to the blindness in which a noble spirit is sometimes suffered to grow into stature; disproportioned stature—that, reaching to heaven, is yet shaken down and

overthrown by the merest breath of storm that sweeps suddenly beneath its skies. The very hopelessness of Margaret Cooper's ambition, which led her to misanthropy, was the source of an ever-fertile and upspringing confidence. Thus it was that the favoring opinions which Alfred Stevens expressed—a favoring opinion expressed by one whom she soon discovered was well able to form one—accompanied by an assurance that the dream of fame which her wild imagination had formed should certainly be realized, gave him a large power over her confidence. Her passion was sway—the sway of mind over mind—of genius over sympathy—of the syren Genius over the subject Love. It was this passion which had made her proud, which had filled her mind with visions, and yielded to her a world by itself, and like no other, filled with all forms of worship and attraction; chivalrous faith, unflagging zeal, generous confidence, pure spirits, and the most unquestioning loyalty! Ignorant of the world which she had not seen, and of those movements of human passion which she had really never felt, she naturally regarded Alfred Stevens as one of the noble representatives of that imaginary empire which her genius continually brought before her eyes. She saw in him the embodiment of that faith in her intellect which it was the first and last hope of her intellect to inspire; and seeing thus, it will be easy to believe that her full heart, which, hitherto, had poured itself forth on rocks, and trees, and solitary places, forgetful of all prudence—a lesson which she had never learned—and rejoicing in the sympathy of a being like herself, now gushed forth with all the volume of its impatient fullness. The adroit art of her companion led her for ever into herself; she was continually summoned to pour forth the treasures of her mind and soul; and, toiling in the same sort of *egoisme* in which her life heretofore had been consumed, she was necessarily diverted from all doubts or apprehensions of the occult purposes of him who had thus beguiled her over the long-frequented paths. As

the great secret of success with the mere worldling, is to pry into the secret of his neighbor while carefully concealing his own, so it is the great misfortune of enthusiasm to be soon blinded to a purpose which its own ardent nature neither allows it to suspect nor penetrate. Enthusiasm is a thing of utter confidence ; it has no suspicion ; it sets no watch on other hearts ; it is too constantly employed in pouring forth the treasures of its own. It is easy, therefore, to deceive and betray it, to beguile it into confidence, and turn all its revelations against itself. How far the frequency of this usage in the world makes it honorable, is a question which we need not discuss on this occasion.

Alfred Stevens had now been for some weeks in the village of Charlemont, where, in the meantime, he had become an object of constantly-increasing interest. The men shrank from him with a feeling of inferiority ; the women—the young ones being understood—shrank from him also, but with that natural art of the sex which invites pursuit, and strives to conquer even in flight. But it was soon evident enough that Stevens bestowed his best regards solely upon Margaret Cooper. If he sought the rest, it was simply in compliance with those seeming duties of his ostensible profession which were necessary to maintain appearances. Whether he loved Margaret Cooper or not, he soon found a pleasure in her society which he sought for in no other quarter of the village. The days, in spite of the strife with William Hinkley, flew by with equal pleasantness and rapidity to both. The unsophisticated mind of Margaret Cooper left her sensible to few restraints upon their ordinary intercourse ; and, indeed, if she did know or regard them for an instant, it was only to consider them as necessary restraints for the protection of the ignorant and feeble of her sex—a class in which she never once thought to include herself. Her attachment to Alfred Stevens, though it first arose from the pleasure which her mind derived from its intercourse with his, and not from any of those nice and

curious sympathies of temperament and taste which are supposed to constitute the essence and comprise the secret of love, was yet sufficient to blind her judgment to the risks of feeling, if nothing more, which were likely to arise from their hourly-increasing intimacy; and she wandered with him into the devious woods, and they walked by moonlight among the solemn-shaded hills, and the unconscious girl had no sort of apprehension that the spells of an enslaving passion were rapidly passing over her soul.

How should she apprehend such spells? how break them? For the first time in her life had she found intellectual sympathy—the only moral response which her heart longed to hear. For the first time had she encountered a mind which could do justice to, and correspond on anything like equal terms with, her own. How could she think that evil would ensue from an acquisition which yielded her the only communion which she had ever craved? Her confidence in herself, in her own strength, and her ignorance of her own passions, were sufficient to render her feelings secure; and then she was too well satisfied of the superiority and nobleness of his. But, in truth, she never thought upon the subject. Her mind dwelt only on the divine forms and images of poetry. The ideal world had superseded, not only the dangers, but the very aspect, of the real. Under the magic action of her fancy, she had come to dwell

“With those gay creatures of the element
That in the colors of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds”—

she had come to speak only in the one language, and of the one topic; and, believing now that she had an auditor equally able to comprehend and willing to sympathize with her cravings, she gave free scope to the utterance of her fancies, and to the headlong impulse of that imagination which had never felt the curb.

The young heart, not yet chilled by the world's denials,

will readily comprehend the beguiling influence of the dreaming and enthusiastic nature of some dear spirit, in whose faith it has full confidence, and whose tastes are kindred with its own. How sweet the luxury of moonlight in commerce with such a congenial spirit! how heavenly the occasional breath of the sweet southwest! how gentle and soothing fond the whispers of night—the twining progress of sad-shining stars—the gentle sway of winds among the tree-tops—the plaintive moan of billows, as they gather and disperse themselves along the shores! To speak of these delights; to walk hand-in-hand along the gray sands by the seaside, and whisper in murmuring tones, that seem to gather sympathies from those of ocean; to guide the eye of the beloved associate to the sudden object; to challenge the kindred fancy which comments upon our own; to remember together, and repeat, the happy verse of inspired poets, speaking of the scene, and to the awakened heart which feels it; and, more, to pour forth one's own inspirations in the language of tenderness and song, and awaken in the heart of our companion the rapture to which our own has given speech—these, which are subjects of mock and scorn to the worldling, are substantial though not enduring joys to the young and ardent nature.

In this communion, with all her pride, strength, and confidence, Margaret Cooper was the merest child. Without a feeling of guile, she was dreaming of the greatness which her ambition craved, and telling her dreams, with all the artless freedom of the child who has some golden fancy of the future, which it seeks to have confirmed by the lips of experience. The wily Stevens led her on, gave stimulus to her enthusiasm, made her dreams become reasonable in her eyes, and laughed at them in his secret heart. She sung at his suggestion, and sung her own verses with all that natural tremor which even the most self-assured poet feels on such an occasion.

“Beautiful!” the arch-hypocrite would exclaim, as if un-

conscious of utterance ; " beautiful ! " and his hand would possess itself of the trembling fingers of hers. " But beautiful as it is, Margaret, I am sure that it is nothing to what you could do under more auspicious circumstances."

" Ah ! if there were ears to hear, if there were hearts to feel, and eyes to weep, I feel, I know, what might be done. No, no ! this is nothing. This is the work of a child."

" Nay, Margaret, if the work of a child, it is that of a child of genius."

" Ah ! do not flatter me, Alfred Stevens, do not deceive me. I am too willing to believe you, for it is so dear a feeling to think that I too am a poet. Yet, at the first, I had not the smallest notion of this kind : I neither knew what poetry was, nor felt the desire to be a poet. Yet I yearned with strange feelings, which uttered themselves in that form ere I had seen books or read the verses of others. It was an instinct that led me as it would. I sometimes fear that I have been foolish in obeying it ; for oh, what has it brought me ? What am I ? what are my joys ? I am lonely even with my companions. I share not the sports and feel not the things which delight my sex. Their dances and frolics give me no pleasure. I have no sympathy with them or their cares. I go apart—I am here on the hills, or deep in the forests—sad, lonely, scarcely knowing what I am, and what I desire."

" You are not alone, nor are your pleasures less acute than theirs. If they laugh, their laughter ends in sleep. If you are sad, you lose not the slightest faculty of perception or sensibility, but rather gain them in consequence. Laughter and tears are signs neither of happiness nor grief, and as frequently result from absolute indifference as from any active emotion. If you are absent from them, you have better company. You can summon spirits to your communion, Margaret ; noble thoughts attend you ; eyes that cheer, lips that assure you, and whispers, from unknown attendants, that bid you be of good heart, for the good

time is coming. Ah! Margaret, believe me when I tell you that time is at hand. Such a genius as yours, such a spirit, can not always be buried in these woods."

It was in such artful language as this that the arch-hypocrite flattered and beguiled her. They were wandering along the edge of the streamlet to which we have more than once conducted the footsteps of the reader. The sun was about setting. The autumn air was mild with a gentle breathing from the south. The woods were still and meek as the slumbers of an infant. The quiet of the scene harmonized with the temper of their thoughts and feelings. They sat upon a fragment of the rock. Margaret was silent, but her eyes were glistening bright—not with hope only, but with that first glimmering consciousness of a warmer feeling, which gives a purple light to hope, and makes the heart tremble, for the first time, with its own expectations. It did not escape Alfred Stevens that, for the first time, her eye sank beneath his glance; for the first time there was a slight flush upon her cheek. He was careful not to startle and alarm the consciousness which these signs indicated. The first feeling which the young heart has of its dependence upon another is one little short of terror; it is a feeling which wakens up suspicion, and puts all the senses upon the watch. To appear to perceive this emotion is to make it circumspect; to disarm it, one must wear the aspect of unconsciousness. The wily Stevens, practised in the game, and master of the nature of the unsuspecting girl, betrayed in his looks none of the intelligence which he felt. If he uttered himself in the language of admiration, it was that admiration which would be natural to a profound adorer of literature and all its professors. His words were those of the amateur:—

"I can not understand, Margaret, how you have studied—how you have learned so much—your books are few—you have had no masters. I never met in my life with so remarkable an instance of unassisted endeavor."

"My books were here in the woods—among these old rocks. My teacher was solitude. Ah! there is no teacher like one's own heart. My instinct made me feel my deficiencies—my deficiencies taught me contemplation—and from contemplation came thoughts and cravings, and you know, when the consciousness of our lack is greatest, then, even the dumb man finds a voice. I found my voice in consequence of my wants. My language you see is that of complaint only."

"And a sweet and noble language it is, Margaret; but it is not in poetry alone that your utterance is so distinct and beautiful—you sing too with a taste as well as power which would prove that contemplation was as happy in bringing about perfection in the one as in the other art. Do sing me, Margaret, that little ditty which you sang here the other night?"

His hand gently detained and pressed hers as he urged the request.

"I would rather not sing to-night," she replied, "I do not feel as if I could, and I trust altogether to feeling. I will sing for you some other time when you do not ask, and, perhaps would prefer not to hear me."

"To hear you at all, Margaret, is music to my ears."

She was silent, and her fingers made a slight movement to detach themselves from his.

"No, Margaret, do not withdraw them! Let me detain them thus—longer—for ever! My admiration of you has been too deeply felt not to have been too clearly shown. Your genius is too dear to me now to suffer me to lose it. Margaret—dear Margaret!"

She spoke not—her breathing became quick and hard.

"You do not speak, let me hope that you are not angry with me?"

"No, no!" she whispered faintly. He continued with more boldness, and while he spoke, his arm encircled her waist.

"A blessed chance brought me to your village. I saw you and returned. I chose a disguise in which I might study you, and see how far the treasures of your mind confirmed the noble promise of your face. They have done more. Like him who finds the precious ore among the mountains, I can not part with you so found. I must tear you from the soil. I must bear you with me. You must be mine, Margaret—you must go with me where the world will see, and envy me my prize."

He pressed her to his bosom. She struggled slightly.

"Do not, do not, Alfred Stevens, do not press me—do not keep me. You think too much of me. I am no treasure—alas! this is all deception. You can not—can not desire it?"

"Do I not! Ah! Margaret, what else do I desire now? Do you think me only what I appear in Charlemont?"

"No! no!"

"I have the power of a name, Margaret, in my profession—among a numerous people—and that power is growing into wealth and sway. I am feared and honored, loved by some, almost worshipped by others; and what has led me from this sway, to linger among these hills—to waste hours so precious to ambition—to risk the influence which I had already secured—what, but a higher impulse—a dearer prospect—a treasure, Margaret, of equal beauty and genius."

Her face was hidden upon his bosom. He felt the beating of her heart against his hand.

"If you have a genius for song, Margaret Cooper, I, too, am not without my boast. In my profession, men speak of my eloquence as that of a genius which has few equals, and no superior."

"I know it—it must be so!"

"Move me not to boast, dear Margaret; it is in your ears only that I do so—and only to assure you that, in listening to my love, you do not yield to one utterly obscure,

and wanting in claims, which, as yours must be finally, are already held to be established and worthy of the best admiration of the intelligent and wise. Do you hear me, Margaret?"

"I do, I do! It must be as you say. But of love I have thought nothing. No, no! I know not, Alfred Stevens, if I love or not—if I can love."

"You mistake, Margaret. It is in the heart that the head finds its inspiration. Mere intellect makes not genius. All the intellect in the world would fail of this divine consummation. It is from the fountains of feeling that poetry drinks her inspiration. It is at the altars of love that the genius of song first bends in adoration. You have loved, Margaret, from the first moment when you sung. It did not alter the case that there was no object of sight. The image was in your mind—in your hope. One sometimes goes through life without ever meeting the human counterpart of this ideal; and the language of such a heart will be that of chagrin—distaste of life—misanthropy, and a general scorn of his own nature. Such, I trust, is not your destiny. No, Margaret, that is impossible. I take your doubt as my answer, and unless your own lips undeceive me, dearest Margaret, I will believe that your love is willing to requite my own."

She was actually sobbing on his breast. With an effort she struggled into utterance.

"My heart is so full, my feelings are so strange—oh! Alfred Stevens, I never fancied I could be so weak."

"So weak—to love! surely, Margaret, you mistake the word. It is in loving only that the heart finds its strength. Love is the heart's sole business; and not to exercise it in its duties is to impair its faculties, and deprive it equally of its pleasures and its tasks. Oh, I will teach you of the uses of this little heart of yours, dear Margaret—ay, till it grow big with its own capacity to teach. We will inform each other, every hour, of some new impulses and

objects. Our dreams, our hopes, our fears, and our desires, ah! Margaret—what a study of love will these afford us. Nor to love only. Ah! dearest, when your muse shall have its audience, its numerous watching eyes and eager ears, then shall you discover how much richer will be the strain from your lips once informed by the gushing fullness of this throbbing heart.”

She murmured fondly in his embrace, “Ah! I ask no other eyes and ears than yours.”

In the glow of a new and overpowering emotion, such indeed was her feeling. He gathered her up closer in his arms. He pressed his lips upon the rich ripe beauties of hers, as some hungering bee, darting upon the yet unrifled flower which it first finds in the shadows of the forest, clings to, and riots on, the luscious loveliness, as if appetite could only be sated in its exhaustion. She struggled and freed herself from his embrace: but, returning home that evening her eye was cast upon the ground; her step was set down hesitatingly; there was a tremor in her heart; a timid expression in her face and manner! These were proofs of the discovery which she then seems to have made for the first time, that there is a power stronger than mere human will—a power that controls genius; that mocks at fame; feels not the lack of fortune, and is independent of the loss of friends! She now first knew her weakness. She had felt the strength of love! Ah! the best of us may quail, whatever his hardihood, in the day when love asserts *his* strength and goes forth to victory.

Margaret Cooper sought her chamber, threw herself on the bed, and turned her face in the pillow to hide the burning blushes which, with every movement of thought and memory, seemed to increase upon her cheek. Yet, while she blushed and even wept, her heart throbbed and trembled with the birth of a new emotion of joy. Ah! how sweet is our first secret pleasure—shared by one other only—sweet to that other as to ourself—so precious to him

also. To be carried into our chamber—to be set up ostentatiously—there, where none but ourselves may see—to be an object of our constant tendance, careful idolatry, keen suspicion, delighted worship!

Ah! but if the other makes it no idol—his toy only—what shall follow this desecration of the sacred thing! What but shame, remorse, humiliation, perhaps death!—alas! for Margaret Cobper, the love which had so suddenly grown into a precious divinity with her, was no divinity with him. He is no believer. He has no faith in such things, but like the trader in religion, he can preach deftly the good doctrines which he can not feel and is slow to practise.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FALL.

WE should speak unprofitably and with little prospect of being understood, did our readers require to be told, that there is a certain impatient and gnawing restlessness in the heart of love, which keeps it for ever feverish and anxious. Where this passion is associated with a warm, enthusiastic genius, owning the poetic temperament, the anxiety is proportionably greater. The ideal of the mind is a sort of classical image of perfect loveliness, chaste, sweet, commanding, but, how cold ! But love gives life to this image, even as the warm rays of the sun falling upon the sullen lips of the Memnon, compel its utterance in music. It not only looks beauty—it breathes it. It is not only the aspect of the Apollo, it is the god himself ; his full lyre strung, his golden bow quivering at his back with the majesty of his motion ; and his lips parting with the song which shall make the ravished spheres stoop, and gather round to listen.

Hitherto Margaret Cooper had been a girl of strong will ; will nursed in solitude, and by the wrong-headed indulgence of a vain and foolish mother. She was conscious of that bounding, bursting soul of genius which possessed her bosom ; that strange, moody, and capricious god ; pent-up, denied, crying evermore for utterance, with a breath more painful to endure, because of the suppression. This consciousness, with the feeling of denial which attended it, had

cast a gloomy intensity over her features not less than her mind. The belief that she was possessed of treasures which were unvalued—that she had powers which were never to be exercised—that with a song such as might startle an empire, she was yet doomed to a silent and senseless auditory of rocks and trees; this belief had brought with it a moody arrogance of temper which had made itself felt by all around her. In one hour this mood had departed. Ambition and love became united for a common purpose; for the object of the latter, was also the profound admirer of the former.

The anxious restlessness which her newly-acquired sensations occasioned in her bosom, was not diminished by a renewal of those tender interviews with her lover, which we have endeavored, though so faultily, already to describe. Evening after evening found them together; the wily hypocrite still stimulating, by his glozing artifices, the ruling passion for fame, which, in her bosom, was only temporarily subservient to love, while he drank his precious reward from her warm, lovely, and still-blushing lips and cheeks. The very isolation in which she had previously dwelt in Charlemont, rendered the society of Stevens still more dear to her heart. She was no longer alone—no longer unknown—not now unappreciated in that respect in which hitherto she felt her great denial. “Here is one—himself a genius—who can do justice to mine.”

The young poet who finds an auditor, where he has never had one before, may be likened to a blind man suddenly put in possession of his sight. He sees sun and moon and stars, the forms of beauty, the images of grace; and his soul grows intoxicated with the wonders of its new empire. What does he owe to him who puts him in possession of these treasures? who has given him his sight? Love, devotion, all that his full heart has to pay of homage and affection.

Such was very much the relation which Margaret Cooper

bore to Alfred Stevens ; and when, by his professions of love, he left the shows of his admiration no longer doubtful, she was at once and entirely his. She was no longer the self-willed, imperious damsel, full of defiance, dreaming of admiration only, scornful of the inferior, and challenging the regards of equals. She was now a timid, trembling girl—a dependant, such as the devoted heart must ever be, waiting for the sign to speak, looking eagerly for the smile to reward her sweetest utterance. If now she walked with Stevens, she no longer led the way ; she hung a little backward, though she grasped his arm—nay, even when her hand was covered with a gentle pressure in the folds of his. If she sung, she did not venture to meet his eyes, which she *felt* must be upon hers, and now it was no longer her desire that the village damsels should behold them as they went forth together on their rambles. She no longer met their cunning and significant smiles with confidence and pride, but with faltering looks, and with cheeks covered with blushes. Great, indeed, was the change which had come over that once proud spirit—change surprising to all, but as natural as any other of the thousand changes which are produced in the progress of moments by the arch-magician, Love. Heretofore, her song had disdained the ordinary topics of the youthful ballad-monger. She had uttered her apostrophes to the eagle, soaring through the black, billowy masses of the coming thunder-storm ; to the lonely but lofty rock, lonely in its loftiness, which no foot travelled but her own ; to the silent glooms of the forest—to the majesty of white-bearded and majestic trees. The dove and the zephyr now shared her song, and a deep sigh commonly closed it. She was changed from what she was. The affections had suddenly bounded into being, trampling the petty vanities under foot ; and those first lessons of humility which are taught by love, had subdued a spirit which, hitherto, had never known control.

Alfred Stevens soon perceived how complete was his vic-

tory. He soon saw the extent of that sudden change which had come over her character. Hitherto, she had been the orator. When they stood together by the lake-side, or upon the rock, it was her finger which had pointed out the objects for contemplation ; it was her voice whose eloquence had charmed the ear, dilating upon the beauties or the wonders which they surveyed. She was now no longer eloquent in words. But she looked a deeper eloquence by far than any words could embody. He was now the speaker ; and regarding him through the favoring media of kindled affections, it seemed to her ear, that there was no eloquence so sweet as his. He spoke briefly of the natural beauties by which they were surrounded.

“ Trees, rocks, the valley and the hill, all realms of solitude and shade, inspire enthusiasm and ardor in the imaginative spirit. They are beneficial for this purpose. For the training of a great poet they are necessary. They have the effect of lifting the mind to the contemplation of vastness, depth, height, profundity. This produces an intensity of mood—the natural result of any association between our own feelings and such objects as are lofty and noble in the external world. The feelings and passions as they are influenced by the petty play of society, which diffuses their power and breaks their lights into little, become concentrated on the noble and the grand. Serious earnestness of nature becomes habitual—the heart flings itself into all the subjects of its interest—it trifles with none—all its labors become sacred in its eyes, and the latest object of study and analysis is that which is always most important. The effect of this training in youth on the poetic mind, is to the last degree beneficial ; since, without a degree of seriousness amounting to intensity—without a hearty faith in the importance of what is to be done—without a passionate fullness of soul which drives one to his task—there will be no truthfulness, no eloquence, no concentrated thought and permanent achievement. With you, dear Margaret, such

has already been the effect. You shrink from the ordinary enjoyments of society. Their bald chat distresses you, as the chatter of so many jays. You prefer the solitude which feeds the serious mood which you love, and enables your imagination, unrepressed by the presence of shallow wittings, to evoke its agents from storm and shadow—from deep forest and lonesome lake—to minister to the cravings of an excited heart, and a soaring and ambitious fancy.”

“ Oh, how truly, Alfred, do you speak it,” she murmured as he closed.

“ So far, so good ; but, dear Margaret—there are other subjects of study which are equally necessary for the great poet. The wild aspects of nature are such as are of use in the first years of his probation. To grow up in the woods and among the rocks, so that a hearty simplicity, an earnest directness, with a constant habit of contemplation should be permanently formed, is a first and necessary object. But it is in this training as in every other. There are successive steps. There is a law of progressive advance. You must not stop there. The greatest moral study for the poet must follow. This is the study of man in society—in the great world—where he puts on a thousand various aspects—far other than those which are seen in the country—in correspondence with the thousand shapes of fortune, necessity, or caprice, which attend him there. Indeed, it may safely be said, that he never knows one half of the responsibility of his tasks who toils without the presence of those for whom he toils. It is in the neighborhood of man that we feel his and our importance. It is while we are watching his strifes and struggles that we see the awful importance of his destiny ; and the great trusts of self, and truth, and the future, which have been delivered to his hands. Here you do not see man. You see certain shapes, which are employed in raising hay, turnips, and potatoes ; which eat and drink very much as man does ; but which, as they suffer to sleep and rest most of those

latent faculties, the exercise of which can alone establish the superiority of the intellectual over the animal nature, so they have no more right to the name of man than any other of those animals who eat as industriously, and sleep as profoundly, as themselves. The contemplation of the superior being, engaged in superior toils, awakens superior faculties in the observer. He who sees nothing but the gathering of turnips will think of nothing but turnips. As we enlarge the sphere of our observation, the faculty of thought becomes expanded. You will discover this wonderful change when you go into the world. Hitherto, your inspirers have been these groves, these rocks, lakes, trees, and silent places. But, when you sit amid crowds of bright-eyed, full-minded, and admiring people; when you see the eyes of thousands looking for the light to shine from yours; hanging, with a delight that still hungers, on the words of truth and beauty which fall from your lips—then, then only, dearest Margaret, will you discover the true sources of inspiration and of fame.”

“Ah!” she murmured despondingly—“you daunt me when you speak of these crowds—crowds of the intellectual and the wise. What should I be—how would I appear among them?”

“As you appear to me, Margaret—their queen, their idol, their divinity, not less a beauty than a muse?”

The raptures which Stevens expressed seemed to justify the embrace which followed it; and it was some moments before she again spoke. When she did the same subject was running in her mind.

“Ah! Alfred, still I fear!”

“Fear nothing, Margaret. It will be as I tell you—as I promise! If I deceive you, I deceive myself. Is it not for the wife of my bosom that I expect this homage?”

Her murmurs were unheard. They strolled on—still deeper into the mazes of the forest, and the broad disk of

the moon, suddenly gleaming, yellow, through the tops of the trees, surprised them in their wanderings.

"How beautiful!" he exclaimed. "Let us sit here, dearest Margaret. The rock here is smooth and covered with the softest lichen. A perfect carpet of it is at our feet, and the brooklet makes the sweetest murmuring as it glides onward through the grove, telling all the while, like some silly schoolgirl, where you may look for it. See the little drops of moonlight falling here and there in the small openings of the forest, and lying upon the greensward like so many scattered bits of silver. One might take it for fairy coin. And, do you note the soft breeze that seems to rise with the moon as from some Cytherean isle, breathing of love, love only — love never perishing!"

"Ah! were it so, Alfred!"

"Is it not, Margaret? If I could fancy that you would cease to love me or I you — could I think that these dear joys were to end — but no! no! let us not think of it. It is too sweet to believe, and the distrust seems as unholy as it is unwholesome. That bright soft planet seems to persuade to confidence as it inspires love. Do you not feel your heart soften in the moonlight, Margaret? your eye glistens, dearest — and your heart, I know, must be touched. It is — I feel its beating! What a tumult, dear Margaret, is here!"

"Do not, do not!" she murmured, gently striving to disengage herself from his grasp.

"No! no! — move not, dearest," he replied in a subdued tone — a murmur most like hers. "Are we not happy? Is there anything, dear Margaret, which we could wish for?"

"Nothing! nothing!"

"Ah! what a blessed chance it was that brought me to these hills. I never lived till now. I had my joys, Margaret — my triumphs! I freely yield them to the past! I care for them no more! They are no longer joys or tri-

umphs! Yes, Margaret you have changed my heart within me. Even fame which I so much worshipped is forgotten."

"Say not that; oh, say not that!" she exclaimed, but still in subdued accents.

"I must—it is too far true. I could give up the shout of applause—the honor of popular favor—the voice of a people's approbation—the shining display and the golden honor—all, dear Margaret, sooner than part with you."

"But you need not give them up, Alfred."

"Ah, dearest, but I have no soul for them now. You are alone my soul, my saint—the one dear object, desire, and pride, and conquest."

"Alas! and have you not conquered, Alfred?"

"Sweet! do I not say that I am content to forfeit all honors, triumphs, applauses—all that was so dear to me before—and only in the fond faith that I had conquered? You are mine—you tell me so with your dear lips—I have you in my fond embrace—ah! do not talk to me again of fame."

"I were untrue to you as to myself, dear Alfred, did I not. No! with your talents, to forego their uses—to deliver yourself up to love wholly, were as criminal as it would be unwise."

"You shall be my inspiration then, dear Margaret. These lips shall send me to the forum—these eyes shall reward me with smiles when I return. Your applause shall be to me a dearer triumph than all the clamors of the populace."

"Let us return home—it is late."

"Not so!—and why should we go? What is sleep to us but loss? What the dull hours, spent after the ordinary fashion, among ordinary people. Could any scene be more beautiful than this—ah! can any feeling be more sweet? Is it not so to you, dearest? tell me—nay, do not tell me—if you love as I do, you can not leave me—not now—

not thus — while such is the beauty of earth and heaven — while such are the rich joys clustering in our hearts. Nay, while, in that hallowing moonlight, I gaze upon thy dark eyes, and streaming hair, thy fair, beautiful cheeks, and those dear rosy lips !”

“ Oh ! Alfred, do not speak so — do not clasp me thus. Let us go. It is late — very late, and what will they say ?”

“ Let them say ! Are we not blessed ? Can all their words take from us these blessings — these sacred, sweet, moments — such joys, such delights ? Let them dream of such, with their dull souls if they can. No ! no ! Margaret — we are one ! and thus one, our world is as free from their control as it is superior to their dreams and hopes. Here is our heaven, Margaret — ah ! how long shall it be ours ! at what moment may we lose it, by death, by storm, by what various mischance ! What profligacy to fly before the time ! No ! no ! but a little while longer — but a little while !”

And there they lingered ! He, fond, artful, persuasive ; she, trembling with the dangerous sweetness of wild, unbidden emotions. Ah ! why did she not go ? Why was the strength withheld which would have carried out her safer purpose ? The moon rose until she hung in the zenith, seeming to linger there in a sad, sweet watch, like themselves — the rivulet ran along, still prattling through the groves ; the breeze, which had been a soft murmur among the trees at the first rising of the moon, now blew a shrill whistle among the craggy hills ; but they no longer heard the prattle of the rivulet — even the louder strains of the breeze were unnoticed, and it was only when they were about to depart, that poor Margaret discovered that the moon had all the while been looking down upon them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BIRTH OF THE AGONY.

It was now generally understood in Charlemont that Margaret Cooper had made a conquest of the handsome stranger. We have omitted — as a matter not congenial to our taste — the small by-play which had been carried on by the other damsels of the village to effect the same object. There had been setting of caps, without number, ay, and pulling them too, and the truth were known among the fair Stellas and Clarissas, the Daphnes and Dorises, of Charlemont, but, though Stevens was sufficiently considerate of the claims of each, so far as politeness demanded it, and contrived to say pleasant things, *pour passer le temps*, with all of them, it was very soon apparent to the most sanguine, that the imperial beauties and imperious mind of Margaret Cooper had secured the conquest for herself.

As a matter of course, the personal and intellectual attractions of Stevens underwent no little disparagement as soon as this fact was known. It was now universally understood that he was no such great thing, after all; and our fair friend the widow Thackeray, who was not without her pretensions to wit and beauty, was bold enough to say that Mr. Stevens was certainly too fat in the face, and she rather thought him stupid. Such an opinion gave courage to the rest, and pert Miss Bella Tompkins, a romp of first-rate excellence, had the audacity to say that he squinted!

—and this opinion was very natural, since neither of his eyes had ever rested with satisfaction on her pouting charms.

It may be supposed that the discontent of the fair bevy, and its unfavorable judgment of himself, did not reach the ears of Alfred Stevens, and would scarcely have disturbed them if it did. Margaret Cooper was more fortunate than himself in this respect. She could not altogether be insensible to the random remarks which sour envy and dark-eyed jealousy continued to let fall in her hearing; but her scorn for the speakers, and her satisfaction with herself, secured her from all annoyance from this cause. Such, at least, had been the case in the first days of her conquest. Such was not exactly the case now. She had no more scorn of others. She was no longer proud, no longer strong. Her eyes no longer flashed with haughty defiance on the train which, though envious, were yet compelled to follow. She could no longer speak in those superior tones, the language equally of a proud intellect, and a spirit whose sensibilities had neither been touched by love nor enfeebled by anxiety and apprehension. A sad change had come over her heart and all her features in the progress of a few days. Her courage had departed. Her step was no longer firm; her eye no longer uplifted like that of the mountain-eagle, to which, in the first darings of her youthful muse, she had boldly likened herself. Her look was downcast, her voice subdued; she was now not less timid than the feeblest damsel of the village in that doubtful period of life when, passing from childhood to girlhood, the virgin falters, as it were, with bashful thoughts, upon the threshold of a new and perilous condition. The intercourse of Margaret Cooper with her lover had had the most serious effect upon her manners and her looks. But the change upon her spirit was no less striking to all.

“I’m sure if I did love any man,” was the opinion of one of the damsels, “I’d die sooner than show it to him, as she

shows it to Alfred Stevens. It's a guess what he must think of it."

"And no hard guess neither," said another; "I reckon there's no reason why he should pick out Margaret Cooper, except that he saw that it was no such easy matter anywhere else."

"Well! there can be no mistake about it with them; for now they're always together—and Betty, her own maid, thinks—but it's better not to say!"

And the prudent antique pursed up her mouth in a language that said everything.

"What!—what does she say?" demanded a dozen voices.

"Well! I won't tell you that. I won't tell you all; but she does say, among other things, that the sooner John Cross marries them, the better for all parties."

"Is it possible!"

"Can it be!"

"Bless me! but I always thought something wrong."

"And Betty, her own maid, told you? Well, who should know, if she don't?"

"And this, too, after all her airs!"

"Her great smartness, her learning, and verse-making! I never knew any good come from books yet."

"And never will, Jane," said another, with an equivocal expression, with which Jane was made content; and, after a full half-hour's confabulation, in the primitive style, the parties separated—each, in her way, to give as much circulation to Betty's inuendoes as the importance of the affair deserved.

Scandal travels along the highways, seen by all but the victim. Days and nights passed; and in the solitude of lonely paths, by the hillside or the rivulet, Margaret Cooper still wandered with her lover. She heard not the poisonous breath which was already busy with her virgin fame. She had no doubts, whatever might be the event, that the

heart of Alfred Stevens could leave her without that aliment which, in these blissful moments, seemed to be her very breath of life. But she felt many fears, many misgivings, she knew not why. A doubt, a cloud of anxiety, hung brooding on the atmosphere. In a heart which is unsophisticated, the consciousness, however vague, that all is not right, is enough to produce this cloud; but, with the gradual progress of that heart to the indulgence of the more active passions, this consciousness necessarily increases, and the conflict then begins between the invading passion and the guardian principle. We have seen enough to know what must be the result of such a conflict with a nature such as hers, under the education which she had received. It did not end in the expulsion of her lover. It did not end in the discontinuance of those long and frequent rambles amid silence, and solitude, and shadow. She had not courage for this; and the poor, vain mother, flattered with the idea that her son-in-law would be a preacher, beheld nothing wrong in their nightly wanderings, and suffered her daughter, in such saintly society, to go forth without restraint or rebuke.

There was one person in the village who was not satisfied that Margaret Cooper should fall a victim, either to the cunning of another, or to her own passionate vanity. This was our old friend Calvert. He was rather inclined to be interested in the damsel, in spite of the ill treatment of his *protégé*, if it were only in consequence of the feelings with which she had inspired him. It has been seen that, in the affair of the duel, he was led to regard the stranger with an eye of suspicion. This feeling had been further heightened by the statements of Ned Hinkley, which, however loose and inconclusive, were yet of a kind to show that there was some mystery about Stevens—that he desired concealment in some respects—a fact very strongly inferred from his non-employment of the village postoffice, and the supposition—taken for true—that he

employed that of some distant town. Ned Hinkley had almost arrived at certainty in this respect; and some small particulars which seemed to bear on this conviction, which he had recently gathered, taken in connection with the village scandal in reference to the parties, determined the old man to take some steps in the matter to forewarn the maiden, or at least her mother, of the danger of yielding too much confidence to one of whom so little was or could be known.

It was a pleasant afternoon, and Calvert was sitting beneath his roof-tree, musing over this very matter, when he caught a glimpse of the persons of whom he thought, ascending one of the distant hills, apparently on their way to the lake. He rose up instantly, and, seizing his staff, hurried off to see the mother of the damsel. The matter was one of the nicest delicacy—not to be undertaken lightly—not to be urged incautiously. Nothing, indeed, but a strong sense of duty could have determined him upon a proceeding likely to appear invidious, and which might be so readily construed, by a foolish woman, into an impertinence. Though a man naturally of quick, warm feelings, Calvert had been early taught to think cautiously—indeed, the modern phrenologist would have said that, in the excess of this prudent organ lay the grand weakness of his moral nature. This delayed him in the contemplated performance much longer than his sense of its necessity seemed to justify. Having now resolved, however, and secure in the propriety of his object, he did not scruple any longer.

A few minutes sufficed to bring him to the cottage of the old lady, and her voice in very friendly tenor commanded him to enter. Without useless circumlocution, yet without bluntness, the old man broached the subject; and, without urging any of the isolated facts of which he was possessed, and by which his suspicions were awakened, he dwelt simply upon the dangers which might result from such a de-

gree of confidence as was given to the stranger. The long, lonely rambles in the woods, by night as well as day, were commented on, justly, but in an indulgent spirit; and the risks of a young and unsuspecting maiden, under such circumstances, were shown with sufficient distinctness for the comprehension of the mother, had she been disposed to hear. But never was good old man, engaged in the thankless office of bestowing good advice, so completely confounded as he was by the sort of acknowledgments which his interference obtained. A keen observer might have seen the gathering storm while he was speaking; and, at every sentence, there was a low, running commentary, bubbling up from the throat of the opinionated dame, somewhat like rumbling thunder, which amply denoted the rising tempest. It was a sort of religious effort which kept the old lady quiet till Calvert had fairly reached a conclusion. Then, rising from her seat, she approached him, smoothed back her apron, perked out her chin, and, fixing her keen gray eyes firmly upon his own, with her nose elongated to such a degree as almost to suggest the possibility of a pointed collision between that member and the corresponding one of his own face, she demanded—

“Have you done—have you got through?”

“Yes, Mrs. Cooper, this is all I came to say. It is the suggestion of prudence—the caution of a friend—your daughter is young, very young, and—”

“I thank you! I thank you! My daughter is young, very young; but she is no fool, Mr. Calvert—let me tell you that! Margaret Cooper is no fool. If you don’t know that, I do. I know her. She’s able to take care of herself as well as the best of us.”

“I am glad you think so, Mrs. Cooper, but the best of us find it a difficult matter to steer clear of danger, and error and misfortune; and the wisest, my dear madam, are only too apt to fall when they place their chief reliance on their wisdom.”

"Indeed! that's a new doctrine to me, and I reckon to everybody else. If it's true, what's the use of all your schooling, I want to know?"

"Precious little, Mrs. Cooper, if—"

"Ah! precious little; and let me tell you, Mr. Calvert, I think it's mighty strange that you should think Margaret Cooper in more need of your advice, than Jane Colter, or Betsy Barnes, or Susan Mason, or Rebecca Forbes, or even the widow Thackeray."

"I should give the same advice to them under the same circumstances, Mrs. Cooper."

"Should you, indeed! Then I beg you will go and give it to them, for if they are not in the same circumstances now, they'd give each of them 'an eye to be so. Ay, wouldn't they! Yes! don't I know, Mr. Calvert, that it's all owing to envy that you come here talking about Brother Stevens."

"But I do not speak of Mr. Stevens, Mrs. Cooper; were it any other young man with whom your daughter had such intimacy I should speak in the same manner."

"Would you, indeed? Tell that to the potatoes. Don't I know better. Don't I know that if your favorite, that you made so much of—your adopted son, Bill Hinkley—if he could have got her to look at him, they might have walked all night and you'd never have said the first word. He'd have given one eye for her, and so would every girl in the village give an eye for Brother Stevens. I'm not so old but I know something. But it won't do. You can go to the widow Thackeray, Mr. Calvert. It'll do her good to tell her that it's very dangerous for her to be thinking about young men from morning to night. It's true you can't say anything about the danger, for precious little danger she's in; but, lord, wouldn't she jump to it if she had a chance. Let her alone for that. You'd soon have cause enough to give her your good advice about the danger, and much good would come of it. She'd wish, after

all was said, that the danger was only twice as big and twice as dangerous."

Such was the conclusion of Mr. Calvert's attempt to give good counsel. It resulted as unprofitably in this as in most cases; but it had not utterly fallen, like the wasted seed, in stony places. There was something in it to impress itself upon the memory of Mrs. Cooper; and she resolved that when her daughter came in, it should be the occasion of an examination into her feelings and her relation to the worthy brother, such as she had more than once before meditated to make.

But Margaret Cooper did not return till a comparatively late hour; and the necessity of sitting up after her usual time of retiring, by making the old lady irritable, had the effect of giving some additional force to the suggestions of Mr. Calvert. When Margaret did return, she came alone. Stevens had attended her only to the wicket. She did not expect to find her mother still sitting up; and started, with an appearance of disquiet, when she met her glance. The young girl was pale and haggard. Her eye had a dilated, wild expression. Her step faltered; her voice was scarcely distinct as she remarked timidly—

"Not yet abed, mother?"

"No! it's a pretty time for you to keep me up."

"But why did you sit up, mother? It's not usual with you to do so."

"No! but it's high time for me to sit up, and be on the watch too, when here's the neighbors coming to warn me to do so—and telling me all about your danger."

"Ha! my danger—speak—what danger, mother?"

"Don't you know what danger? Don't you know?"

"Know!" The monosyllable subsided in a gasp. At that moment Margaret Cooper could say no more.

"Well, I suppose you don't know, and so I'll tell you. Here's been that conceited, stupid old man, Calvert, to tell me how wrong it is for you to go out by night walking with

Brother Stevens; and hinting to me that you don't know how to take care of yourself with all your learning; and how nobody knows anything about Brother Stevens; as if nobody was wise for anything but himself. But I gave him as good as he brought, I'll warrant you. I sent him off with a flea in his ear!"

It was fortunate for the poor girl that the light, which was that of a dipped candle, was burning in the corner of the chimney, and was too dim to make her features visible. The ghastly tale which they told could not have been utterly unread even by the obtuse and opinionated mind of the vain mother. The hands of Margaret were involuntarily clasped in her agony, and she felt very much like falling upon the floor; but, with a strong effort, her nerves were braced to the right tension, and she continued to endure, in a speechless terror, which was little short of frenzy, the outpourings of her mother's folly which was a frenzy of another sort.

"I sent him off," she repeated, "with a flea in his ear. I could see what the old fool was driving after, and I as good as told him so. If it had been his favorite, his adopted son, Bill Hinkley, it would have been another guess-story—I reckon. Then you might have walked out where you pleased together, at all hours, and no harm done, no danger; old Calvert would have thought it the properest thing in the world. But no Bill Hinkley for me. I'm for Brother Stevens, Margaret; only make sure of him, my child—make sure of him."

"No more of this, dear mother, I entreat you. Let us go to bed, and think no more of it."

"And why should we not think of it? I tell you, Margaret, *you must think of it!* Brother Stevens soon will be a preacher, and a fine speck he will be. There'll be no parson like him in all west Kentucky. As for John Cross, I reckon he won't be able to hold a candle to him. Brother Stevens is something to try for. You must play your cards

nicely, Margaret. Don't let him see too soon that you like him. Beware of that! But don't draw off too suddenly as if you didn't like him—that's worse still; for very few men like to see that they ain't altogether pleasing even at first sight to the lady that they like. There's a medium in all things, and you must just manage it, as if you wa'n't thinking at all about him, or love, or a husband, or anything; only take care always to turn a quick ear to what he says, and seem to consider it always as if 'twas worth your considering. And look round when he speaks, and smile softly sometimes; and don't be too full of learning and wisdom in what you say, for I've found that men of sense love women best when they seem to talk most like very young children—maybe because they think it's a sign of innocence. But I reckon, Margaret, you don't want much teaching. Only be sure and fix him; and don't stop to think when he asks. Be sure to have your answer ready, and you can't say 'yes' too quickly now-a-days, when the chances are so very few."

The mother paused to take breath. Her very moral and maternal counsel had fallen upon unheeding ears. But Margaret was sensible of the pause, and was desirous of taking advantage of it. She rose from her chair, with the view of retiring; but the good old dame, whose imagination had been terribly excited by the delightful idea of having a preacher for her son-in-law who was to take such precedence over all the leaders of the other tribes, was not willing to abridge her eloquence.

"Why, you're in a great hurry now, Margaret. Where was your hurry when you were with Brother Stevens? Ah! you jade, can't I guess—don't I know? There you were, you two, under the trees, looking at the moon, and talking such sweet, foolish nonsense. I reckon, Margaret, 'twould puzzle you to tell what *he* said, or what *you* said, I can guess he didn't talk much religion to you, heh? Ah! I know it all. It's the old story. It's been so with all

young people, and will be so till the end. Love is the strangest thing, and it does listen to the strangest nonsense. Ain't it so, Margaret? I know nothing but love would ever dumbfounder you in this way; why, child, have you lost your tongue? What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, mother, let me retire now, I have such a headache."

"Heartache, you mean."

"Heartache it is," replied the other desperately, with an air of complete abandonment.

"Ah! well, it's clear that he's got the heartache quite as much as you, for he almost lives with you now. But make him speak out, Margaret—get him to say the word, and don't let him be too free until he does. No squeezing of hands, no kissing, no—"

"No more, no more, I entreat you, mother, if you would not drive me mad! Why do you speak to me thus—why counsel me in this manner? Leave me alone, I pray you, let me retire—I must—I must sleep now!"

The mother was not unaccustomed to such passionate bursts of speech from her daughter, and she ascribed the startling energy of her utterance now, to an excited spirit in part, and partly to the headache of which she complained.

"What! do you feel so bad, my child? Well, I won't keep you up any longer. I wouldn't have kept you up so long, if I hadn't been vexed by that old fool, Calvert."

"Mr. Calvert is a good man, mother."

"Well, he may be—I don't say a word against that," replied the mother, somewhat surprised at the mildly reproachful nature of that response which her daughter had made, so different from her usual custom:—"he may be very good, but I think he's very meddlesome to come here talking about Brother Stevens."

"He meant well, mother."

"Well or ill, it don't matter. Do you be ready when Brother Stevens says the word. He'll say it before long. He's mighty keen after you, Margaret. I've seen it in his

eyes; only you keep a little off, till he begins to press and be anxious; and after that he can't help himself. He'll be ready for any terms; and look you, when a man's ready, none of your long bargains. Settle up at once. As for waiting till he gets permission to preach, I wouldn't think of it. A man can be made a preacher or anything, at any time, but 'tain't so easy in these times, for a young woman to be made a wife. It's not every day that one can get a husband, and such a husband! Look at Jane Colter, and Betsy Barnes, and Rebecca Forbes, and Susan Mason; they'll be green again, I reckon, before the chance comes to them; ay, and the widow Thackeray—though she's had her day already. If 'twas a short one she's got no reason to complain. She'll learn how to value it before it begins again. But, go to bed, my child, you oughtn't to have a headache. No! no! you should leave it to them that's not so fortunate. They'll have headaches and heartaches enough, I warrant you, before they get such a man as Brother Stevens."

At last, Margaret Cooper found herself alone and in her chamber. With unusual vigilance she locked and double-locked the door. She then flung herself upon the bed. Her face was buried in the clothes. A convulsion of feeling shook her frame. But her eyes remained dry, and her cheeks were burning. She rose at length and began to undress, but for this she found herself unequal. She entered the couch and sat up in it—her hands crossed upon her lap—her face wan, wild, the very picture of hopelessness if not desperation! The words of her weak mother had tortured her; but what was this agony to that which was occasioned by her own thoughts.

"Oh God!" she exclaimed at length, "can it be real? Can it be true? Do I wake? Is it no dream? Am I, am I what I dare not name to myself—and dread to hear from any other? Alas! it is true—too true. That shade, that wood!—oh, Alfred Stevens! Alfred Stevens! What have you done! To what have you beguiled me!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

STRENGTH AFTER FALL.

THAT weary night no sleep came to the eyelids of the hapless Margaret Cooper. The garrulous language of the mother had awakened far other emotions in her bosom than those which she labored to inspire; and the warning of Mr. Calvert, for the first time impressed upon herself the terrible conviction that she was lost. In the wild intoxicating pleasures of that new strange dream, she had been woefully unconscious of the truth. So gradual had been the progress of passion, that it had never alarmed or startled her. Besides, it had come to her under a disguise afforded by the customary cravings of her soul. Her vanity had been the medium by which her affections had been won, by which her confidence had been beguiled, by which the guardian watchers of her virtue had been laid to sleep.

What a long and dreadful night was that when Margaret Cooper was first brought to feel the awful truth in its true impressiveness of wo. Alas! how terribly do the pleasures of sin torture us. The worst human foe is guilt. The severest censure the consciousness of wrong doing. Poverty may be endured—nay is—and virtue still be secure; since the mind may be made strong to endure the heaviest toil, yet cherish few desires; the loss of kin may call for few regrets, if we feel that we have religiously performed our duties toward them, and requited all their proper claims upon us. Sickness and pain may even prove benefits and

blessings, if it shall so happen that we resign ourselves without complaint, to the scourge of the chastener, and grow patient beneath his stripes. But that self-rebuke of one's own spirit from which we may not fly—that remorseful and ever-vexing presence which haunts us, and pursues with a wing even more fleet than that of fear—which tells clamorously of what we had, and scornfully of what we have lost—lost for ever! that is the demon from whom there is no escape, and beyond whom there is no torture. Vainly would we strive with this relentless enemy. Every blow aimed at its shadowy bosom recoils upon our own. In the crowd, it takes the place of other forms and dogs us with suspicious glances; in the solitude, it stalks boldly to our side, confronts us with its audacious truths and terrible denunciations—leaves no moment secure, waking or sleeping! It is the ghost of murdered virtue, brooding over its grave in that most dark and dismal of all sepulchres, the human heart. And if we cry aloud, as did Margaret Cooper, with vain prayer for the recall of a single day, with what a yell of derisive mockery it answers to our prayer.

The night was passed in the delusive effort of the mind to argue itself into a state of fancied security. She endeavored to recall those characteristics in Alfred Stevens, by which her confidence had been beguiled. This task was not a difficult one in that early day of her distress; before experience had yet come to confirm the apprehensions of doubt—before the intoxicating dream of a first passion had yet begun to stale upon her imagination. Her own elastic mind helped her in this endeavor. Surely, she thought, where the mind is so noble and expansive, where the feelings are so tender and devoted, the features so lofty and impressive, the look so sweet, the language so delicate and refined, there can be no falsehood.

“The devotion of such a man,” she erringly thought, “might well sanction the weakness of a woman's heart—”

might well persuade to the momentary error which none will seek more readily to repair than himself. If *he* be true to me, what indeed should I care for the scorn of others."

Alas! for the credulous victim. This was the soul of her error. This scorn of others—of the opinions of the world around her, is the saddest error of which woman, who is the most dependant of all beings in the moral world, can ever be guilty. But such philosophy did not now deceive even the poor girl by whom it was uttered. It is a melancholy truth, that, where there is no principle, the passions can not be relied on; and the love of Alfred Stevens had hitherto shown itself in selfishness. Margaret Cooper felt this, but she did not dare to believe it.

"No! no!" she muttered—"I will not doubt—I will not fear! He is too noble, too generous, too fond! I could not be deceived."

Her reliance was upon her previous judgment, not upon his principles. Her self-esteem assisted to make this reference sufficient for the purposes of consolation, and this was all that she desired in this first moment of her doubt and apprehension.

"And if he be true—if he keep for ever the faith that his lips and looks declare—then will I heed nothing of the shame and the sin. The love of such a man is sufficient recompense for the loss of all besides. What to me is the loss of society? what should I care for the association and opinions of these in Charlemont? And elsewhere—he will bear me hence where none can know. Ah! I fear not: he will be true."

Her self-esteem was recovering considerably from its first overthrow. Her mind was already preparing to do battle with those, the scorn of whom she anticipated, and whose judgments she had always hitherto despised. This was an easy task. She was yet to find that it was not the only task. Her thoughts are those of many, in like situa-

tions, and it is for this reason that we dwell upon them. Our purpose is, to show the usual processes of self-deception.

Margaret Cooper, like a large class of persons of strong natural mind and sanguine temper, was only too apt to confound the cause of virtue with its sometimes uncouth, harsh, and self-appointed professors. She overlooked the fact that public opinion, though a moral object against which woman dares not often offend, is yet no standard for her government; that principles are determinable elsewhere; and that, whatever the world may think of them, and whatever may be their seeming unimportance under existing circumstances, are the only real moral securities of earth. She might fly from Charlemont, either into a greater world, or into a more complete solitude, but she would fly to no greater certainties than she now possessed. Her securities were still based upon the principles of Alfred Stevens, and of these she knew nothing. She knew that he was a man of talent—of eloquence; alas for her! she had felt it; of skill—she had been its victim; of rare sweetness of utterance, of grace and beauty; and as she enumerated to herself these his mental powers and personal charms, she felt, however numerous the catalogue, that none of these afforded her the guaranty she sought.

She arose the next day somewhat more composed, and with a face which betrayed sleeplessness, but nothing worse. This she ascribed to the headache with which she had retired. She had not slept an instant, and she arose entirely unrefreshed. But the stimulating thoughts which had kept her wakeful, furnished her with sufficient strength to appear as usual in the household, and to go through her accustomed duties. But it was with an impatience scarcely restrainable that she waited for the approach of evening which would bring her lover. Him she felt it now absolutely of the last necessity that she should see; that she should once more go with him to those secret places, the very thought

of which inspired her with terror, and, laying bare her soul to his eyes, demand of him the only restitution which he could make.

He came. Once more she descended the steps to meet him. Her mother arrested her on the stairway. A cunning leer was in her eye, as she looked into the woful, impassive eyes of her daughter. She grinned with a sort of delight expressive of the conviction that the advice she had given the night before was to be put in execution soon.

"Fix him, Margaret; he's mighty eager for you. You've cut your eye-tooth—be quick, and you'll have a famous parson for a husband yet."

The girl shrunk from the counsellor as if she had been a serpent. The very counsel was enough to show her the humiliating attitude in which she stood to all parties.

"Remember," said the old woman, detaining her—"don't be too willing at first. Let him speak fairly out. A young maiden can't be too backward, until the man offers to make her a young wife!"

The last words went to her soul like an arrow.

"A young maiden!" she almost murmured aloud, as she descended the steps—"O God! how lovely now, to my eyes, appears the loveliness of a young maiden!"

She joined Stevens in silence, the mother watching them with the eyes of a maternal hawk as they went forth together. They pursued a customary route, and, passing through one of the gorges of the surrounding hills, they soon lost sight of the village. When the forest-shadows had gathered thickly around them, and the silence of the woods became felt, Stevens approached more nearly, and, renewing a former liberty, put his arm about her waist. She gently but firmly removed it, but neither of them spoke a word. A dense copse appeared before them. Toward it he would have led the way. But she resolutely turned aside, and, while a shudder passed over her frame, exclaimed—

“Not there—not there!”

Breathlessly she spoke. He well enough understood her. They pursued an opposite direction, and, in the shade of a wood which before they had never traversed, they at length paused. Stevens, conducting her to the trunk of a fallen tree, seated her, and placed himself beside her. Still they were silent. There was a visible constraint upon both. The thoughts and feelings of both were alike active—but very unlike in character. With him, passion, reckless passion, was uppermost; selfish in all its phases, and resolute on its own indulgence at every hazard. In her bosom was regret if not remorse, mingled with doubts and hopes in pretty equal proportion. Yet had she, even then, but little doubt of him. She accused him of no practice. She fancied, foolish girl, that his error, like her own, had been that of blind impulse, availing itself of a moment of unguarded reason to take temporary possession of the citadel of prudence. That he was calculating, cunning—that his snares had been laid beforehand—she had not the least idea. But she was to grow wiser in this and other respects in due season. How little did she then conjecture the coldness and hardness of that base and selfish heart which had so fanned the consuming flame in hers!

Her reserve and coolness were unusual. She had been the creature, heretofore, of the most uncalculating impulse. The feeling was spoken, the thought uttered, as soon as conceived. Now she was silent. He expected her to speak—nay, he expected reproaches, and was prepared to meet them. He had his answer for any reproaches which she might make. But for that stony silence of her lips he was not prepared. The passive grief which her countenance betrayed—so like despair—repelled and annoyed him. Yet, wherefore had she come, if not to complain bitterly, and, after exhaustion, be soothed at last? Such had been his usual experience in all such cases. But the unsophisticated woman before him had no language for such

a situation as was hers. Her pride, her ambition—the very intensity of all her moods—rendered the effort at speech a mockery, and left her dumb.

“You are sad, Margaret—silent and very cold to me,” he said, at last breaking the silence. His tones were subdued to a whisper, and how full of entreating tenderness! She slowly raised her eyes from the ground, and fixed them upon him. What a speech was in that one look! There was no trace of excitement, scarcely of expression, in her face. There was no flush upon her cheeks. She was pale as death. She was still silent. Her eye alone had spoken; and from its searching but stony glance his own fell in some confusion to the ground. There was a dreary pause, which he at length broke:—

“You are still silent, Margaret—why do you not speak to me?”

“It is for you to speak, Alfred,” was her reply. It was full of significance, understood but not *felt* by her companion. What, indeed, had she to say—what could she say—while he said nothing? She was the victim. With him lay the means of rescue and preservation. She but waited the decision of one whom, in her momentary madness, she had made the arbiter of her destiny: Her reply confused him. He would have preferred to listen to the ordinary language of reproach. Had she burst forth into tears and lamentations—had she cried, “You have wronged me—you must do me justice!”—he would have been better pleased than with the stern, unsuggestive character that she assumed. To all this, his old experience would have given him an easy answer. But to be driven to condemn himself—to define his own doings with the name due to his deserts—to declare his crime, and proffer the sufficient atonement—was an unlooked-for necessity.

“You are displeased with me, Margaret.”

He dared not meet her glance while uttering this feeble and purposeless remark. It was so short of all that he

should have said—of all that she expected—that her eyes glistened with a sudden expression of indignation which was new to them in looking upon him. There was a glittering sarcasm in her glance, which showed the intensity of her feelings in the comment which they involuntarily made on the baldness and poverty of his. Displeasure, indeed! That such an epithet should be employed to describe the withering pang, the vulturous, gnawing torture in her bosom—and that fiery fang which thought, like some winged serpent, was momentarily darting into her brain!

“Displeased!” she exclaimed, in low, bitter tones, which she seemed rather desirous to suppress—“no, no! sir—not displeased. I am miserable, most miserable—anything but displeased. I am too wretched to feel displeasure!”

“And to me you owe this wretchedness, dear Margaret—*that—that* is what you would say. Is it not, Margaret? I have wronged—I have ruined you! From me comes this misery! You hate, you would denounce me.”

He put his arm about her waist—he sank upon his knee beside her—his eye, now that he had found words, could once more look courageously into hers.

“Wronged—ruined!” she murmured, using a part of his words, and repeating them as if she did not altogether realize their perfect sense.

“Ay, you would accuse me, Margaret,” he continued—“you would reproach and denounce me—you hate me—I deserve it—I deserve it.”

She answered with some surprise:—

“No, Alfred Stevens, I do not accuse—I do not denounce you. I am wretched—I am miserable. It is for you to say if I am wronged and ruined. I am not what I was—I know *that*!—What I am—what I will be!—”

She paused! Her hands were clasped suddenly and violently—she looked to heaven, and, for the first time, the tears, streamed from her eyes like rain—a sudden, heavy shower, which was soon over.

"Ah, Margaret, you would have me accuse myself—and I do. The crime is mine! I have done you this wrong——"

She interrupted him.

"No, Alfred Stevens, *I* have done wrong! *I feel* that I have done wrong. That I have been feeble and criminal, *I know*. I will not be so base as to deny what I can not but feel. As for your crime, you know best what it is. I know mine. I know that my passions are evil and presumptuous; and though I blush to confess their force, it is yet due to the truth that I should do so, though I sink into the earth with my shame. But neither your self-reproaches nor my confession will acquit us. Is there nothing, Alfred Stevens, that can be done? Must I fall before you, here, amidst the woods which have witnessed my shame, and implore you to save me? I do! Behold me! I am at your feet—my face is in the dust. Oh! Alfred Stevens—when I called your eyes to watch, in the day of my pride, the strong-winged eagle of our hills, did I look as now? Save me from this shame! save me! For, though I have no reproaches, yet God knows, when we looked on that eagle's flight together, my soul had no such taint as fills it now. Whatever were my faults, my follies, my weaknesses, Heaven knows, I felt not, feared not this! a thought—a dream of such a passion, then—never came to my bosom. From you it came! You put it there! You woke up the slumbering emotion—you—but no!—I will not accuse you! I will only implore you to save me! Can it be done? can you do it—will you—will you not?"

"Rise, dearest Margaret—let me lift you!" She had thrown herself upon the earth, and she clung to it.

"No, no! your words may lift me, Alfred Stevens, when your hands can not. If you speak a hope, a promise of safety, it will need no other help to make me rise! If you do not!—I would not wish to rise again. Speak! let me hear, even as I am, what my doom shall be? The pride

which has made me fall shall be reconciled to my abasement."

"Margaret, this despair is idle. There is no need for it. Do I not tell you that there is no danger?"

"Why did you speak of ruin?" she demanded.

"I know not—the word escaped me. There is no ruin. I will save you. I am yours—yours only. Believe me, I will do you right. I regard you as sacredly my wife as if the rites of the church had so decreed it."

"I dare not disbelieve you, Alfred! I have no hope else. Your words lift me! Oh! Alfred Stevens, you did not mean the word, but how true it was; what a wreck what a ruin do I feel myself now—what a wreck have I become!"

"A wreck, a ruin! no, Margaret, no! never were you more beautiful than at this very moment. These large, sad eyes—these long, dark lashes seem intended to bear the weight of tears. These cheeks are something paler than their wont, but not less beautiful, and these lips——"

He would have pressed them with his own—he would have taken her into his arms, but she repulsed him.

"No, no! Alfred—this must not be. I am yours. Let me prove to you that I am firm enough to protect your rights from invasion."

"But why so coy, dearest? Do you doubt me?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Ah! but you do. Why do you shrink from me—why this coldness? If you are mine, if these charms are mine why not yield them to me? I fear, Margaret, that you doubt me still?"

"I do not—dare not doubt you, Alfred Stevens. My life hangs upon this faith."

"Why so cold, then?"

"I am not cold. I love you—I will be your wife; and never was wife more faithful, more devoted, than I will be to you; but, if you knew the dreadful agony which I have

felt, since that sad moment of my weakness, you would forbear and pity me."

"Hear me, Margaret; to-morrow is Saturday. John Cross is to be here in the evening. He shall marry us on Sunday. Are you willing?"

"Oh, yes! thankful, happy! Ah! Alfred, why did I distrust you for an instant?"

"Why, indeed! But you distrust me no longer—you have no more misgivings?"

"No, none!"

"You will be no longer cold, no longer coy, dear Margaret—here in the sweet evening, among these pleasant shades, love, alone, has supremacy. Here, in the words of one of your favorites:—

"Where transport and security entwine,
Here is the empire of thy perfect bliss,
And here thou art a god——"

concluding this quotation, he would have taken her in his embrace—he would have renewed those dangerous endearments which had already proved so fatal; but she repulsed the offered tenderness, firmly, but with gentleness.

"Margaret, you still doubt me," he exclaimed reproachfully.

"No, Alfred, I doubt you not. I believe you. I have only been too ready and willing to believe you. Ah! have you not had sufficient proof of this? Leave me the consciousness of virtue—the feeling of strength still to assert it, now that my eyes are open to my previous weakness."

"But there is no reason to be so cold. Remember you are mine by every tie of the heart—another day will make you wholly mine. Surely, there is no need for this frigid bearing. No, no! you doubt—you do not believe me, Margaret!"

"If I did not believe you, Alfred Stevens," she answered gravely, "my prayer would be for death, and I should find

it. These woods which have witnessed my fault should have witnessed my expiation. The homes which have known me should know me no more."

The solemnity of her manner rather impressed him, but having no real regard for her, he was unwilling to be baffled in his true desires.

"If you doubt me not—if you have faith in me, Margaret, why this solemnity, this reserve? Prove to me, by your looks, by your actions, by the dear glances, the sweet murmurs, and the fond embrace, what these cold assurances do not say."

His hand rested on her neck. She gently raised and removed it.

"I have already proved to you my weakness. I will now prove my strength. It is better so, Alfred. If I have won your love, let me now command your esteem, or maintain what is left me of my own. Do not be angry with me if I insist upon it. I am resolute now to be worthy of you and of myself."

"Ah! you call this love?" said he bitterly. "If you ever loved, indeed, Margaret——"

"If I ever loved—and have I given you no proofs?" she exclaimed in a burst of passion; "all the proofs that a woman can give, short of her blood; and that, Alfred Stevens—that too, I was prepared to give, had you not promptly assured me of your faith."

She drew a small dagger from her sleeve, and bared it beneath his glance.

"Think you I brought this without an object? No! Alfred Stevens—know me better! I came here prepared to die, as well as a frail and erring woman could be prepared. You disarmed the dagger. You subdued the determination when you bid me live for you. In your faith, I am willing to live. I believe you, and am resolved to make myself worthy of your belief also. I have promised to be your wife, and here before Heaven, I swear to be your

faithful wife ; but, until then, you shall presume in no respect. Your lip shall not touch mine ; your arms shall not embrace me ; you shall see, dear Alfred, that, with my eyes once opened fully upon my own weakness, I have acquired the most certain strength."

"Give me the dagger," he said.

She hesitated.

"You doubt me still?"

"No, no!" she exclaimed, handing him the weapon—"no, no! I do not doubt you—I dare not. Doubt you, Alfred?—that were death, even without the dagger!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

BULL-PUPS IN TRAINING.

ALFRED STEVENS was sufficiently familiar with the sex to perceive that Margaret Cooper was resolved. There was that in her look and manner which convinced him that she was not now to be overcome. There was no effort or constraint in either her looks or language. The composure of assured strength was there. The discovery of her weakness, which he had so unexpectedly made, had rendered her vigilant. Suspecting herself—which women are not apt to do—she became watchful, not only of the approach of her lover, but of every emotion of her own soul; and it was with a degree of chagrin which he could scarcely refrain from showing, that he was compelled to forego, at least for the present, all his usual arts of seduction.

Yet he knew not how to refrain. Never had Margaret Cooper seemed so lovely in his eyes, so commanding, so eloquent with beauty, as now, when remorse had touched her eyes with an unwonted shadow, and tears and night-watching had subdued the richer bloom upon her cheek. Proud still, but pensive in her pride, she walked silently beside him, still brooding over thoughts which she would not willingly admit were doubts, and grasping every word of assurance that fell from his lips as if it had been some additional security.

These assurances he still suffered to escape him, with sufficient frequency and solemnity, to confirm that feeling

of confidence which his promise of marriage had inspired in her mind. There was a subdued fondness in his voice, and an *empressement* in his manner, which was not all practice. The character which Margaret Cooper had displayed in this last interview—her equal firmness and fear—the noble elevation of soul which, admitting her own errors, disdained to remind him of his—a course which would have been the most ready of adoption among the weaker and less generous of the sex—had touched him with a degree of respect akin to admiration; and so strong was the impression made upon him of her great natural superiority of mind to almost all the women he had ever met, that, but for her one unhappy lapse, he had sought no other wife. Had she been strong at first as she proved herself at last, this had been inevitable.

When in his own chamber that night, he could not help recalling to his memory the proud elevation of her character as it had appeared in that interview. The recollection really gave him pain, since along with it arose the memory also of that unfortunate frailty, which became more prominent as a crime in connection with that intellectual merit which, it is erroneously assumed, should have made it sure.

“But for that, Margaret Cooper, and this marriage were no vain promise. But that forbids. No, no—no spousals for me: let John Cross and the bride be ready or not, there shall be a party wanting to that contract! And yet, what a woman to lose! what a woman to win! No tragedy-queen ever bore herself like that. Talk of Siddons, indeed! *She* would have brought down the house in that sudden prostration—that passionate appeal. She made even me tremble. I could have loved her for that, if for that only. To make *me* tremble! and with such a look, such an eye, such a stern, sweet, fierce beauty! By Heavens! I know not how to give her up. What a sensation she would make in Frankfort! Were she my wife—but no, no! bait for gudgeons! I am not so great a fool as that. She who

is mine on my terms, is yours, sir, or yours--is anybody's, when the humor suits and the opportunity. I can not think of that. Yet, to lose her is as little to be thought of. I must manage it. I must get her off from this place. It need not be to Frankfort! Let me see--there is--hum!--hum!--yes, a ride of a few miles--an afternoon excursion--quite convenient, yet not too near. It must be managed; but, at all events, I must evade this marriage--put it off for the present--get some decent excuse. That's easy enough, and for the rest, why, time that softens all things, except man and woman, time will make that easy too. To-morrow for Ellisland, and the rest after."

Thus, resolving not to keep his vows to his unhappy victim, the criminal was yet devising plans by which to continue his power over her. These plans, yet immature in his own mind, at least unexpressed, need not be analyzed here, and may be conjectured by the reader.

That night, Stevens busied himself in preparing letters. Of these he wrote several. It will not further our progress to look over him as he writes; and we prefer rather, in this place, to hurry on events which, it may be the complaint of all parties, reader not omitted, have been too long suffered to stagnate. But we trust not. Let us hurry Stevens through Friday night--the night of that last interview.

Saturday morning, we observe that his appetite is unimpaired. He discusses the breakfast at Hinkley's as if he had never heard of suffering. He has said an unctuous grace. Biscuits hot, of best Ohio flour, are smoking on his plate. A golden-looking mass of best fresh butter is made to assimilate its luscious qualities with those of the drier and hotter substance. A copious bowl of milk, new from the dugs of old Brindle, stands beside him, patiently waiting to be honored by his unscrupulous but not unfastidious taste. The grace is said, and the gravy follows. He has a religious regard for the goods and gifts of this

life. He eats heartily, and the thanks which follow, if not from the bottom of the soul, were sufficiently earnest to have emanated from the bottom of his stomach.

This over, he has a chat with his hosts. He discusses with old Hinkley the merits of the new lights. What these new lights were, at that period, we do not pretend to remember. Among sectarians, there are periodical new lights which singularly tend to increase the moral darkness. From these, after a while, they passed to the love festivals or feasts—a pleasant practice of the methodist church, which is supposed to be very promotive of many other good things besides love; though we are constrained to say that Brother Stevens and Brother Hinkley—who, it may be remarked, had very long and stubborn arguments, frequently without discovering, till they reached the close, that they were thoroughly agreed in every respect except in words—concurred in the opinion that there was no portion of the church practice so highly conducive to the amalgamation of soul with soul, and all souls with God, as this very practice of love-feasts!

Being agreed on this and other subjects, Mr. Hinkley invited Brother Stevens out to look at his turnips and potatoes; and when this delicate inquiry was over, toward ten o'clock in the day, Brother Stevens concluded that he must take a gallop; he was dyspeptic, felt queerish, his studies were too close, his mind too busy with the great concerns of salvation. These are enough to give one dyspepsia. Of course, the hot rolls and mountains of volcanic butter—steam-ejecting—could have produced no such evil effects upon a laborer in the vineyard. At all events, a gallop was necessary, and the horse was brought. Brother Hinkley and our matronly sister of the same name watched the progress of the pious youth, as, spurring up the hills, he pursued the usual route, taking at first the broad highway leading to the eastern country.

There were other eyes that watched the departure of

Brother Stevens with no less interest, but of another kind, than those of the venerable couple. Our excellent friend Calvert started up on hearing the tread of the horse, and, looking out from his porch, ascertained with some eagerness of glance that the rider was Alfred Stevens.

Now, why was the interest of Calvert so much greater on this than on any other previous occasion? We will tell you, gentle reader. He had been roused at an early hour that morning by a visit from Ned Hinkley.

"Gran'pa," was the reverent formula of our fisherman at beginning, "to-day's the day. I'm pretty certain that Stevens will be riding out to-day, for he missed the last Saturday. I'll take my chance for it, therefore, and brush out ahead of him. I think I've got it pretty straight now, the place that he goes to, and I'll see if I can't get there soon enough to put myself in a comfortable fix, so as to see what's a-going on and what he goes after. Now, gran'pa, I'll tell you what I want from you—them pocket-pistols of your'n. Bill Hinkley carried off grandad's, and there's none besides that I can lay hold on."

"But, Ned, I'm afraid to lend them to you."

"What 'fraid of?"

"That you'll use them."

"To be sure I will, if there's any need, gran'pa. What do I get them for?"

"Ah, yes! but I fear you'll find a necessity where there is none. You'll be thrusting your head into some fray in which you may lose your ears."

"By Jupiter, no! No, gran'pa, I'll wait for the necessity. I won't look for it. I'm going straight ahead this time, and to one object only. I think Stevens is a rascal, and I'm bent to find him out. I've had no disposition to lick anybody but him, ever since he drove Bill Hinkley off—you and him together."

"You'll promise me, Ned?"

"Sure as a snag in the forehead of a Mississippi steamer. Depend upon me."

"But there must be no quarrelling with Stevens either, Ned."

"Look you, gran'pa, if I'm to quarrel with Stevens or anybody else, 'twouldn't be your pistols in my pocket that would make me set on, and 'twouldn't be the want of 'em that would make me stop. When it's my cue to fight, look you, I won't need any prompter, in the shape of friend or pistol. Now *that* speech is from one of your poets, pretty near, and ought to convince you that you may as well lend the puppies and say no more about it. If you don't you'll only compel me to carry my rifle, and that'll be something worse to an enemy, and something heavier for me. Come, come, gran'pa, don't be too scrupulous in your old age. *Your having* them is a sufficient excuse for *my having* them too. It shows that they ought to be had."

"You're logic-chopping this morning, Ned—see that you don't get to man-chopping in the afternoon. You shall have the pistols, but do not use them rashly. I have kept them simply for defence against invasion; not for the purpose of quarrel, or revenge."

"And you've kept them mighty well, gran'pa," replied the young man, as he contemplated with an eye of anxious admiration, the polish of the steel barrels, the nice carving of the handles, and the fantastic but graceful inlay of the silver-mounting and setting. The old man regarded him with a smile.

"Yes, Ned, I've kept them well. They have never taken life, though they have been repeatedly tried upon bull's eye and tree-bark. If you will promise me not to use them to-day, Ned, you shall have them."

"Take 'em back, gran'pa."

"Why?"

"Why, I'd feel the meanest in the world to have a we'pon, and not use it when there's a need to do so; and I'm half afraid that the temptation of having such beautiful puppies for myself—twin-puppies, I may say—having just

the same look out of the eyes, and just the same spots and marks, and, I reckon, just the same way of giving tongue—I'm half afraid, I say, that to get to be the owner of them, might tempt me to stand quiet and let a chap wink at me—maybe laugh outright—maybe suck in his breath, and give a phew-phew-whistle just while I'm passing! No! no! gran'pa, take back your words, or take back your puppies. Won't risk to carry both. I'd sooner take Patsy Rifle, with all her weight, and no terms at all."

"Pshaw, Ned, you're a fool."

"That's no news, gran'pa, to you or me. But it don't alter the case. Put up your puppies."

"No, Ned; you shall have them on your own terms. Take 'em as they are. I give them to you."

"And I may shoot anybody I please this afternoon, gran'pa?"

"Ay, ay, Ned—anybody—"

Thus far the old man, when he stopped himself, changed his manner, which was that of playful good-humor, to that of gravity, while his tones underwent a corresponding change.—

"But, Ned, my son, while I leave it to your discretion, I yet beg you to proceed cautiously—seek no strife, avoid it—go not into the crowd—keep from them where you see them drinking, and do not use these or any weapons for any trifling provocation. Nothing but the last necessity of self-preservation justifies the taking of life."

"Gran'pa—thank you—you've touched me in the very midst of my tender-place, by this handsome present. One of these puppies I'll name after you, and I'll notch it on the butt. The other I'll call Bill Hinkley, and I won't notch that. Yours, I'll call my pacific puppy, and I'll use it only for peace-making purposes. The other I'll call my bull-pup, and him I'll use for baiting and butting, and goring. But, as you beg, I promise you I'll keep 'em both out of mischief as long as I can. Be certain sure

that it won't be my having the pups that'll make me get into a skrimmage a bit the sooner; for I never was the man to ask whether my dogs were at hand before I could say the word, 'set-on!' It's a sort of nature in a man that don't stop to look after his weapons, but naturally expects to find 'em any how, when his blood's up, and there's a necessity to do."

This long speech and strong assurance of his pacific nature and purposes, did not prevent the speaker from making, while he spoke, certain dextrous uses of the instruments which were given into his hands. Right and left were equally busy; one muzzle was addressed to the candle upon the mantelpiece, the other pursued the ambulatory movements of a great black spider upon the wall. The old man surveyed him with an irrepressible smile. Suddenly interrupting himself the youth exclaimed:—

"Are they loaded, gran'pa?"

He was answered in the negative.

"Because, if they were," said he, "and that great black spider was Brother Stevens, I'd show you in the twinkle of a musquito, how I'd put a finish to his morning's work. But I'd use the bull-pup, gran'pa—see, this one—the pacific one I'd empty upon him with powder only, as a sort of *feu de joie*—and then I'd set up the song—what's it? ah! *Te Deum*. A black spider always puts me in mind of a rascal."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FOX IN THE TRAP.

THE youth barely stopped to swallow his breakfast, when he set off from the village. He managed his movements with considerable caution ; and, fetching a circuit from an opposite quarter, after having ridden some five miles out of his way, passed into the road which he suspected that Stevens would pursue. We do not care to show the detailed processes by which he arrived at this conclusion. The reader may take for granted that he had heard from some way-side farmer, that a stranger rode by his cottage once a week, wearing such and such breeches, and mounted upon a nag of a certain color and with certain qualities. Enough to say, that Ned Hinkley was tolerably certain of his route and man.

He sped on accordingly—did not once hesitate at turns, right or left, forks and cross-roads, but keeping an inflexible course, he placed himself at such a point on the road as to leave it no longer doubtful, should Stevens pass, of the place which usually brought him up. Here he dismounted, hurried his horse, out of sight and hearing, into the woods, and choosing a position for himself, with some nicety, along the road-side, put himself in close cover, where, stretching his frame at length, he commenced the difficult labor of cooling his impatience with his cogitations.

But cogitating, with a fellow of his blood, rather whets impatience. He was monstrous restiff. At his fishing

pond, with a trout to hook, he would have lain for hours, as patient as philosophy itself, and as inflexible as the solid rock over which he brooded. But without an angle at his hand, how could he keep quiet? Not by thinking, surely; and, least of all, by thinking about that person for whom his hostility was so active. Thinking of Stevens, by a natural association, reminded him of the pistols which Calvert had given him. Nothing could be more natural than to draw them from his bosom. Again and again he examined them in fascinated contemplation. He had already charged them, and he amused himself by thinking of the mischief he could do, by a single touch upon the trigger, to a poor little wood-rat, that once or twice ran along a decaying log some five steps from his feet. But his object being secrecy, the rat brushed his whiskers in safety. Still he amused himself by aiming at this and other objects, until suddenly reminded of the very important difference which he had promised Calvert to make between the pistols in his future use of them. With this recollection he drew out his knife, and laid the weapons before him.

"This," said he, after a careful examination, in which he fancied he discovered some slight difference between them in the hang of the trigger—"this shall be my bull-pup—this my peace-maker!"

The latter was marked accordingly with a "P," carved rudely enough by one whose hand was much more practised in slitting the weasand of a buck, than in cutting out, with crayon, or Italian crow-quill, the ungainly forms of the Roman alphabet. Ned Hinkley shook his head with some misgiving when the work was done; as he could not but see that he had somewhat impaired the beauty of the peace-maker's butt by the hang-dog looking initial which he had grafted upon it. But when he recollected the subordinate uses to which this "puppy" was to be put, and considered how unlikely, in his case, it would be exposed to sight in

comparison with its more masculine brother, he grew partially reconciled to an evil which was now, indeed, irreparable.

It does not require that we should bother the reader with the numberless thoughts and fancies which bothered our spy, in the three mortal hours in which he kept his watch. Nothing but the hope that he should ultimately be compensated to the utmost by a full discovery of all that he sought to know, could possibly have sustained him during the trying ordeal. At every new spasm of impatience which he felt, he drew up his legs, shifted from one side to the other, and growled out some small thunder in the shape of a threat that "it would be only so much the worse for him when the time came!" *Him*—meaning Stevens.

At last Stevens came. He watched the progress of his enemy with keen eyes; and, with his "bull-pup" in his hand, which a sort of instinct made him keep in the direction of the highway, he followed his form upon the road. When he was out of sight and hearing, the spy jumped to his feet. The game, he felt, was secure now—in one respect at least.

"He's for Ellisland. That was no bad guess then. He might have been for Fergus, or Jonesboro', or Debarre, but there's no turn now in the clear track to Ellisland. He's there for certain."

Ned Hinkley carefully restored his pistols to his bosom and buttoned up. He was mounted in a few moments, and pressing slowly forward in pursuit. He had his own plans which we will not attempt to fathom; but we fear we shall be compelled to admit that he was not sufficiently a gentleman to scruple at turning scout in a time of peace (though, with him, by the way, and thus he justified, he is in pursuit of an enemy, and consequently is at war), and dodging about, under cover, spying out the secrets of the land, and not very fastidious in listening to conversation that does not exactly concern him. We fear that there is some such flaw in the character of Ned Hinkley, though, otherwise, a

good, hardy fellow—with a rough and tumble sort of good nature, which, having bloodied your nose, would put a knife-handle down your back, and apply a handful of cobwebs to the nasal extremity in order to arrest the hæmorrhage. We are sorry that there is such a defect in his character; but we did not put it there. We should prefer that he should be perfect—the reader will believe us—but there are grave lamentations enough over the failures of humanity to render our homilies unnecessary. Ned Hinkley was not a gentleman, and the only thing to be said in his behalf, is, that he was modest enough to make no pretensions to the character. As he once said in a row, at the company muster:—

“I’m blackguard enough, on this occasion, to whip e’er a gentleman among you!”

Without any dream of such a spectre at his heels to disturb his imagination, Alfred Stevens was pursuing his way toward Ellisland, at that easy travelling gait, which is the best for man and beast, vulgarly called a “dog-trot.” Some very fine and fanciful people insist upon calling it a “jog-trot.” We beg leave, in this place, to set them right. Every trot is a jog, and so, for that matter, is every canter. A dog-trot takes its name from the even motion of the smaller quadruped, when it is seized with no particular mania, and is yet disposed to go stubbornly forward. It is in more classical dialect, the *festina lente* motion. It is regularly forward, and therefore fast—it never puts the animal out of breath, and is therefore slow. Nobody ever saw a dog practice this gait, with a tin canister at his tail, and a huddle of schoolboys at his heels. No! it is *the* travelling motion, considering equally the health of all parties, and the necessity of getting on.

In this desire, Ned Hinkley pressed too closely on the heels of Stevens. He once nearly overhauled him; and falling back, he subdued his speed, to what, in the same semi-figurative language, he styled “the puppy-trot.” Ob-

serving these respective gaits, Brother Stevens rode into Ellisland at a moderately late dinner-hour, and the pursuer followed at an unspeakable, but not great, distance behind him. We will, henceforward, after a brief glance at Ellisland, confine ourselves more particularly to the progress of Brother Stevens.

Ellisland was one of those little villages to which geographers scarcely accord a place upon the maps. It is not honored with a dot in any map that we have ever seen of Kentucky. But, for all this, it is a place! Some day the name will be changed into Acarnania or Etolia, Epirus or Scandinavia, and then be sure you shall hear of it. Already, the village lawyers—there are two of them—have been discussing the propriety of a change to something classical; and we do not doubt that, before long, their stupidity will become infectious. Under these circumstances Ellisland will catch a name that will stick. At present you would probably never hear of the place, were it not necessary to our purposes and those of Brother Stevens.

It has its tavern and blacksmith shop—its church—the meanest fabric in the village—its postoffice and public well and trough. There is also a rack *pro bono publico*, but as it is in front of the tavern, the owner of that establishment has not wholly succeeded in convincing the people that it was put there with simple reference to the public convenience. The tavern-keeper is, politically, a quadrupled personage. He combines the four offices of postmaster, justice of the peace, town council, and publican; and is considered a monstrous small person with all. The truth is, reader—this aside—he has been democrat and whig, alternately, every second year of his political life. His present politics, being loco-foco, are in Ellisland considered *contra bonos mores*. It is hoped that he will be dismissed from office, and a memorial to that effect is in preparation; but the days of Harrison—"and Tyler too"—have not yet come round, and Jerry Sunderland, who

knows what his enemies are driving at, whirls his coat-skirts, and snaps his fingers, in scorn of all their machinations. He has a friend at Washington, who spoons in the back parlor of the white-house—in other words, is a member of the kitchen-cabinet, of which, be it said, *en passant*, there never was a president of the United States yet entirely without one—and—there never will be! So much for politics and Ellisland.

There was some crowd in the village on the day of Brother Stevens's arrival. Saturday is a well-known day in the western and southern country for making a village gathering; and when Brother Stevens, having hitched his horse at the public rack, pushed his way to the postoffice, he had no small crowd to set aside. He had just deposited his letters, received others in return, answered some ten or fifteen questions which Jerry Sunderland, P. M., Q. U., N. P., M. C., publican and sinner—such were all deservedly his titles—had thought it necessary to address to him, when he was suddenly startled by a familiar tap upon the shoulder; such a tap as leads the recipient to imagine that he is about to be honored with the affectionate salutation of some John Doe or Richard Roe of the law. Stevens turned with some feeling of annoyance, if not misgiving, and met the arch, smiling, and very complacent visage of a tall, slender young gentleman in black bushy whiskers and a green coat, who seized him by the hand and shook it heartily, while a chuckling half-suppressed laughter gurgling in his throat, for a moment, forbade the attempt to speak. Stevens seemed disquieted and looked around him suspiciously.

“What! you here, Ben?”

“Ay, you see me! You didn't expect to see me, Warham——”

“Hush!” was the whispered word of Stevens, again looking round him in trepidation.

“Oh! ay!” said the other with a sly chuckle, and also

in a whisper, "Mr. Stevens—Brother Stevens—hem! I did not think. How is your holiness to-day?"

"Come aside," muttered Stevens; and, taking the arm of the incautious speaker, he led him away from the crowd, and took the way out of the village. Their meeting and departure did not occasion much, if any, sensation. The visitors in the village were all too busy in discussing the drink and doctrines, pretty equally distributed, of Jerry the publican. But there was one eye that noted the meeting of the friends; that beheld the concern and confusion of Stevens; that saw their movements, and followed their departing steps.

"Take your horse—where is he?" demanded Stevens.

"Here, at hand; but what do you mean to do?"

"Nothing, but get out of hearing and sight; for your long tongue, Ben, and significant face, would blab any secret, however deep."

"Ah! did I not say that I would find you out? Did you get my last letter?"

"Ay, I did: but I'm devilish sorry, Ben, that you've come. You'll do mischief. You have always been a marplot."

"Never, never! You don't know me."

"Don't I?—but get your horse, and let's go into the woods, while we talk over matters."

"Why not leave the nags here?"

"For a very good reason. My course lies in that direction, so that I am in my way; while yours, if your purpose be to go back to Frankfort, will lie on the upper side. Neither of us need come back to the village."

"And you think to shuffle me off so soon, do you?"

"What would you have me do?"

"Why, give us a peep at this beauty—this Altamira of yours—at least."

"Impossible! Do not think of it, Ben; you'd spoil all. But, get the horse. These billet-heads will suspect mis-

chief if they see us talking together, particularly when they behold your conceited action. This political landlord will surmise that you are a second Aaron Burr, about to beat up recruits to conquer California. Your big whiskers—what an atrocious pair!—with your standing collar, will confirm the impression.”

The two were soon mounted, and rode into the adjoining woods. They were only a stone’s-throw from the village, when Stevens alighted, followed by his companion. They hitched their horses to some swinging branches of a sheltering tree, and, going aside a few paces beyond, seated themselves upon the grass, as they fancied, in a place of perfect security.

“And now, Ben, what in truth brings you here?” demanded Stevens, in tones of voice and with a look which betrayed anything but satisfaction with the visit.

“Curiosity, I tell you, and the legs of my horse.”

“Pshaw! you have some other motive.”

“No, ’pon honor. I resolved to find you out—to see what you were driving at, and where. I could only guess a part from your letter to Barnabas, and that costive scrawl with which you honored me. Perhaps, too—and give my friendship credit for the attempt—I came with some hope to save you.”

“Save me—from what?”

“Why, wedlock—the accursed thing! The club is in terror lest you should forget your vows. So glowing were your descriptions of your Cleopatra, that we knew not what to make. We feared everything.”

“Why, Barnabas might have opened your eyes: he knew better.”

“You’re not married, then?”

“Pshaw! no.”

“Nor engaged?”

The other laughed as he replied:—

“Why, on that head, the least said the better. The ro-

ving commission permits you to run up any flag that the occasion requires."

"Ah, you sly dog!—and what success?"

"Come, come, Ben, you must not be so inquisitive. The game's my own, you know; and the rules of the club give me immunity from a fellow-member."

"By Gad, I'll resign! I must see this forest beauty."

"Impossible!"

"Where's she? How will you prevent?"

"By a very easy process. Do you know the bird that shrieks farthest from her young ones when the fowler is at hand? I'll follow her example."

"I'll follow you to the uttermost ends of the earth, Warham!"

"Hush! you forget! Am I not Brother Stevens? Ha! ha! ha! You are not sufficiently reverent, brother. See you no divinity in my look and bearing? Hark you, Ben, I've been a sort of small divinity in the eyes of a whole flock for a month past!"

"You pray?"

"And preach!"

"Ha! ha! ha!—devilish good; but I must see you in order to believe. I must, indeed, Brother Stevens. Why, man, think of it—success in this enterprise will make you head of the fraternity—you will be declared pope: but you must have witnesses!"

"So I think; and hark ye, Ben"—laying a finger on the arm of the other—"I am successful!"

"What! you don't say so! This queen, this princess of Egypt, Cleopatra, Altamira—eh?"

"Is mine—soul and body—she is mine!"

"And is what you say? Come, come, you don't mean that such a splendid woman as you describe—such a genius, poet, painter, musician—beauty too!—you don't mean to say that—"

"I do, every bit of it."

"'Gad! what a fellow!—what a lucky dog! But you must let me see her, Warham!"

"What! to spoil all—to blurt out the truth?—for, with every disposition to fib, you lack the ability. No, no, Ben: when the game's up—when I'm tired of the sport, and feel the necessity of looking out fresh viands—you shall then know all; I'll give the clue into your own hands, and you may follow it to your heart's content. But not now!"

"But how will you get rid of me, *mon ami*, if my curiosity is stubborn?"

"Do as the kill-deer does—travel from the nest—go home with you, rather than you should succeed in your impertinence, and have you expelled from the club for thrusting your spoon into the dish of a brother-member."

"You're a Turk, with no bowels of compassion. But, at all events, you promise me the dish when you're done with it? you give me the preference?"

"I do!"

"Swear by Beelzebub and Mohammed; by Jupiter Ammon and Johannes Secundus; by the ghost of Cardinal Bembo, and the gridiron of the fraternity!"

"Ay, and by the virginity of Queen Elizabeth!"

"Simulacrum! no! no! no such oath for me! That's swearing by the thing that is not, was not—could not be! You shall swear by the oaths of the club—you must be bound on the gridiron of the fraternity, before I believe you. Swear!"

"You are as tenacious as the ghost of buried Denmark. But you shall be satisfied. I swear by the mystic gridiron of the fraternity, and by the legs thereof, of which the images are Beelzebub, Mohammed, Johannes Secundus, and so forth—nay, by that memorable volume, so revered in the eyes of the club, the new edition of 'The Basiad,' of which who among us has been the true exponent?—that profound mystery of sweets, fathomed hourly, yet

unfathomable still—for which the commentators, already legions, are hourly becoming legions more;—by these, and by the mysteries of the mirror that reflects not our own, but the image we desire;—by these things—by all things that among the brotherhood are held potent—I swear to—”

“Give me the preference in the favor of this princess; the clue to find her when you have left her; and the assurance that you will get a surfeit as soon as possible: swear!”

“Nay, nay! I swear not to that last! I shall hold on while appetite holds, and make all efforts not to grow dyspeptic in a hurry. I’ll keep my stomach for a dainty, be sure, as long as I can. I were no brother, worthy of our order, if I did not.”

“Well, well—to the rest! Swear to the rest, and I am satisfied.”

“You go back, then, *instantly*?”

“What! this very day?”

“This hour!”

“The d—! you don’t mean *that*, Warham?” returned the other in some consternation.

“Ay, this very hour! You must swear to that. Your oath must precede mine.”

“Ah! man, remember I only got here last night—long ride—hard-trotting horse. We have not seen each other for months. I have a cursed sight to tell you about the boys—girls too—love, law, logic, politics. Do you know they talk of running you for the house?”

“All in good season, Ben; not now. No, no! you shall see me when you least look for me, and there will be time enough for all these matters then. They’ll keep. For the present, let me say to you that we must part now within the hour. You must swear not to dog my steps, and I will swear to give you *carte blanche*, and the first privileges at my princess, when I leave her. This is my bargain. I make no other.”

"I've a great mind not to leave you," said the other doggedly.

"And what will that resolution bring you, do you fancy? Do you suppose I am to be tracked in such a manner? No, Ben! The effect will be to make me set off for the east instantly, whether you go with me or not; and an equally certain effect will be to make us cut loose for ever."

"You're a d——d hard colt to manage," said the other moodily.

"I sha'n't let myself be straddled by every horse-boy, I assure you."

"Come, come, old fellow, that's too much like horse-play. Don't be angry with me. I'll accept your conditions."

"Very good," said Stevens; "if you did not, Ben, it would be no better for you; for, otherwise, you should never even see my beauty!"

"Is she so very beautiful, old boy?"

"A queen, I tell you! a proud, high-spirited, wild beauty of the mountains—a thing of fire and majesty—a glorious woman, full of song and sentiment and ambition—a genius, I tell you—who can improvise like Corinne, and, by the way, continually reminds one of that glorious creature. In Italy, she would have been greater than Corinne."

"And you've won her—and she loves you?"

"Ay—to doting! I found her a sort of eagle—soaring, striving—always with an eye upon the hills, and fighting with the sunbeams. I have subdued her. She is now like a timid fawn that trembles at the very falling of a leaf in the forests. She pants with hope to see me, and pants with tremulous delight when I come. Still, she shows every now and then, a glimmering of that eagle spirit which she had at first. She flashes up suddenly, but soon sinks again. Fancy a creature, an idolater of fame before, suddenly made captive by love, and you have a vain, partial image of my forest-princess."

“What a lucky dog! You’ll marry her yet, old boy, in spite of all!”

“Pshaw! You are green to talk so.”

“You’ll be devilish loath to give her up; I’m afraid I’ll have to wait a cursed long time.”

“No, not long! Do not despair. Easy won, easy valued.”

“And was she easily won?”

“Very! the game was a short one. She is a mere country-girl, you know, but eighteen or thereabouts—suspecting nobody, and never dreaming that she had a heart or passions at all. She thought only of her poetry and her books. It was only necessary to work upon heart and passions while talking of poetry and books, and they carried her out of her depth before she could recover. She’s wiser now, Ben, I can assure you, and will require more dexterity to keep than to conquer.”

“And she has no brother to worry a body—no d——d ugly Hobnail, who has a fancy for her, and may make a window between the ribs of a gallant, such as nature never intended, with the ounce-bullet of some d——d old-fashioned seven-foot rifle—eh?”

“There was a silly chap, one Hinkley, who tried it on me—actually challenged me, though I was playing parson, and there might have been work for me but for his own bull-headed father, who came to my rescue, beat the boy and drove him from the place. There is nobody else to give me any annoyance, unless it be a sort of half-witted chap, a cousin of the former—a sleepy dog that is never, I believe, entirely awake unless when he’s trout-fishing. He has squinted at me, as if he could quarrel if he dared, but the lad is dull—too dull to be very troublesome. You might kiss his grandmother under his nose, and he would probably regard it only as a compliment to her superior virtues, and would thank you accordingly——”

A voice a little to the left interrupted the speaker.

“So he does, my brave parson, for his grandmother’s sake and his own,” were the words of the speaker. They turned in sudden amaze to the spot whence the sounds issued. The bushes opening in this quarter, presented to the astonished eyes of Brother Stevens, the perfect image of the dull lad of whom he had been speaking. There was Ned Hinkley in proper person—perfectly awake, yet not trout-fishing! A sarcastic grin was upon his visage, and rolling his eyes with a malicious leer, he repeated the words which had first interrupted the progress of the dialogue between the friends.

“I thank you, Brother Stevens, for the compliment to my grandmother’s virtues. I thank you, on her account as well as my own. I’m very grateful, I assure you, very grateful, very!”

CHAPTER XXXI.

“ABSQUATULATING.”

HAD a bolt suddenly flashed and thundered at the feet of the two friends, falling from a clear sky in April, they could not have been more astounded. They started, as with one impulse, in the same moment to their feet.

“Keep quiet,” said the intruder; “don’t let me interrupt you in so pleasant a conversation. I’d like to hear you out. I’m refreshed by it. What you say is so very holy and sermon-like, that I’m like a new man when I hear it. Sit down, Brother Stevens, and begin again; sit down, Ben, my good fellow, and don’t look so scary! You look as if you had a window in your ribs already!”

The intruder had not moved, though he had startled the conspirators. He did not seem to share in their excitement. He was very coolly seated, with his legs deliberately crossed, while his two hands parted the bushes before him in order to display his visage—perhaps with the modest design of showing to the stranger that his friend had grievously misrepresented its expression. Certainly, no one could say that, at this moment, it lacked anything of spirit or intelligence. Never were eyes more keen—never were lips more emphatically made to denote sarcasm and hostility. The whole face was alive with scorn, and hate, and bitterness; and there was defiance enough in the glance to have put wings to fifty bullets.

His coolness, the composure which his position and words

manifested, awakened the anger of Brother Stevens as soon as the first feeling of surprise had passed away. He felt, in a moment, that the game was up with him—that he could no longer play the hypocrite in Charlemont. He must either keep his pledges to Margaret Cooper, without delay or excuse, or he must abandon all other designs which his profligate heart may have suggested in its cruel purposes against her peace.

“Scoundrel!” he exclaimed; “how came you here? What have you heard?”

“Good words, Brother Stevens. You forget, you are a parson.”

“Brain the rascal!” exclaimed the whiskered stranger, looking more fierce than ever. The same idea seemed to prompt the actions of Stevens. Both of them, at the same moment, advanced upon the intruder, with their whips uplifted; but still Ned Hinkley did not rise. With his legs still crossed, he kept his position, simply lifting from the sward beside him, where they had been placed conveniently, his two “puppies.” One of these he grasped in his right hand and presented as his enemies approached.

“This, gentlemen,” said he, “is my peace-maker. It says, ‘Keep your distance.’ This is my bull-pup, or peace-breaker; it says, ‘Come on.’ Listen to which you please. It’s all the same to me. Both are ready to answer you, and I can hardly keep ’em from giving tongue. The bull-pup longs to say something to you, Brother Stevens—the pacificator is disposed to trim your whiskers, Brother Ben; and I say, for ’em both, come on, you black-hearted rascals, if you want to know whether a girl of Charlemont can find a man of Charlemont to fight her battles. I’m man enough, by the Eternal, for both of you!”

The effect of Hinkley’s speech was equally great upon himself and the enemy. He sprang to his feet, ere the last sentence was concluded, and they recoiled in something like indecent haste. The language of determination was even

more strongly expressed by the looks of the rustic than by his language and action. They backed hurriedly at his approach.

“What! won’t you stand?—won’t you answer to your villanies?—won’t you fight? Pull out your barkers and blaze away, you small-souled scamps; I long to have a crack at you—here and there—both at a time! Aint you willing? I’m the sleepy trout-fisherman! Don’t you know me? You’ve waked me up, my lads, and I sha’n’t sleep again in a hurry! As for you, Alfred Stevens—you were ready to fight Bill Hinkley—here’s another of the breed—won’t you fight him?”

“Yes—give me one of your pistols, if you dare, and take your stand,” said Stevens boldly.

“You’re a cunning chap—give you one of my puppies—a stick for my own head—while this bush-whiskered chap cudgels me over from behind. No! no! none of that! Besides, these pistols were a gift from a good man, they sha’n’t be disgraced by the handling of a bad one. Get your own weapons, Brother Stevens. and every man to his tree.”

“They are in Charlemont!”

“Well!—you’ll meet me there then?”

“Yes!” was the somewhat eager answer of Stevens, “I will meet you there—to-morrow morning—”

“Sunday—no! no!”

“Monday, then; this evening, if we get home in season.”

“It’s a bargain then,” replied Hinkley, “though I can hardly keep from giving you the teeth of the bull! As for big-whiskered Ben, there, I’d like to let him taste my pacificator. I’d just like to brush up his whiskers with gun-powder—they look to have been done up with bear’s grease before, and have a mighty fine curl; but if I wouldn’t frizzle them better than ever a speckled hen had her feathers frizzled, then I don’t know the virtues of gun-powder. On Monday morning, Brother Stevens!”

“Ay, ay! on Monday morning!”

Had Ned Hinkley been more a man of the world—had he not been a simple backwoodsman, he would have seen, in the eagerness of Stevens to make this arrangement, something, which would have rendered him suspicious of his truth. The instantaneous thought of the arch-hypocrite, convinced him that he could never return to Charlemont if this discovery was once made there. His first impulse was to put it out of the power of Ned Hinkley to convey the tidings. We do not say that he would have deliberately murdered him; but, under such an impulse of rage and disappointment as governed him in the first moments of detection, murder has been often done. He would probably have beaten him into incapacity with his whip—which had a heavy handle—had not the rustic been sufficiently prepared. The pistols of Stevens were in his valise, but he had no purpose of fighting, on equal terms, with a man who spoke with the confidence of one who knew how to use his tools; and when the simple fellow, assuming that he would return to Charlemont for his chattels, offered him the meeting there, he eagerly caught at the suggestion as affording himself and friend the means of final escape.

It was not merely the pistols of Hinkley of which he had a fear. But he well knew how extreme would be the danger, should the rustic gather together the people of Ellisland, with the story of his fraud, and the cruel consequences to the beauty of Charlemont, by which the deception had been followed. But the simple youth, ignorant of the language of libertinism, had never once suspected the fatal lapse from virtue of which Margaret Cooper had been guilty. He was too unfamiliar with the annals and practices of such criminals, to gather this fact from the equivocal words, and half-spoken sentences, and sly looks of the confederates. Had he dreamed this—had it, for a moment, entered into his conjecturings—that such had been the case, he would probably have shot down the seducer without

a word of warning. But that the crime was other than prospective, he had not the smallest fancy; and this may have been another reason why he took the chances of Stevens's return to Charlemont, and let him off at the moment.

"Even should he not return," such may have been his reflection—"I have prevented mischief at least. He will be able to do no harm. Margaret Cooper shall be warned of her escape, and become humbler at least, if not wiser, in consequence. At all events, the eyes of Uncle Hinkley will be opened, and poor Bill be restored to us again!"

"And now mount, you scamps," said Hinkley, pressing upon the two with presented pistols. "I'm eager to send big-whiskered Ben home to his mother; and to see you, Brother Stevens, on your way back to Charlemont. I can hardly keep hands off you till then; and it's only to do so, that I hurry you. If you stay, looking black, mouthing together, I can't stand it. I will have a crack at you. My peace-maker longs to brush up them whiskers. My bull-pup is eager to take you, Brother Stevens, by the muzzle! Mount you, as quick as you can, before I do mischief."

Backing toward their horses, they yielded to the advancing muzzles, which the instinct of fear made them loath to turn their backs upon. Never were two hopeful projectors so suddenly abased—so completely baffled. Hinkley, advancing with moderate pace, now thrust forward one, and now the other pistol, accompanying the action with a specific sentence corresponding to each, in manner and form as follows:—

"Back, parson—back, whiskers! Better turn, and look out for the roots, as you go forward. There's no seeing your way along the road by looking down the throats of my puppies. If you want to be sure that they'll follow till you're mounted, you have my word for it. No mistake, I tell you. They're too eager on scent, to lose sight of you in a hurry, and they're ready to give tongue at a moment's

warning. Take care not to stumble, whiskers, or the pacificator 'll be into your brush."

"I'll pay you for this!" exclaimed Stevens, with a rage which was not less really felt than judiciously expressed. "Wait till we meet!"

"Ay, ay! I'll wait; but be in a hurry. Turn now, your nags are at your backs. Turn and mount!"

In this way they reached the tree where their steeds were fastened. Thus, with the muzzle of a pistol bearing close upon the body of each—the click of the cock they had heard—the finger close to the trigger they saw—they were made to mount—in momentary apprehension that the backwoodsman, whose determined character was sufficiently seen in his face, might yet change his resolve, and with wanton hand, riddle their bodies with his bullets. It was only when they were mounted, that they drew a breath of partial confidence.

"Now," said Hinkley, "my lads, let there be few last words between you. The sooner you're off the better. As for you, Alfred Stevens, the sooner you're back in Charlemont the more daylight we'll have to go upon. I'll be waiting you, I reckon, when you come."

"Ay, and you may wait," said Stevens, as the speaker turned off and proceeded to the spot where his own horse was fastened.

"You won't return, of course?" said his companion.

"No! I must now return with you, thanks to your interference. By Heavens, Ben, I knew, at your coming, that you would do mischief; you have been a marplot ever; and after this, I am half-resolved to forswear your society for ever."

"Nay, nay! do not say so, Warham. It was unfortunate, I grant you; but how the devil should either of us guess that such a Turk as that was in the bush?"

"Enough for the present," said the other. "It is not

now whether I wish to ride with you or not. There is no choice. There is no return to Charlemont."

"And that's the name of the place, is it?"

"Yes! yes! Much good may the knowledge of it do you."

"How fortunate that this silly fellow concluded to let you off on such a promise. What an ass!"

"Yes! but he may grow wiser! Put spurs to your jade, and let us see what her heels are good for, for the next three hours. I do not yet feel secure. The simpleton may grow wiser and change his mind."

"He can scarcely do us harm now, if he does."

"Indeed!" said Stevens—"you know nothing. There's such a thing as hue and cry, and its not unfrequently practised in these regions, when the sheriff is not at hand and constables are scarce. Every man is then a sheriff."

"Well—but there's no law-process against us!"

"You are a born simpleton, I think," said Stevens, with little scruple. He was too much mortified to be very heedful of the feelings of his companion. "There needs no law in such a case, at least for the *capture* of a supposed criminal; and, for that matter, they do not find it necessary for his punishment either. Hark ye, Ben—there's a farmhouse?"

"Yes, I see it!"

"Don't you smell tar?—They're running it now!"

"I think I do smell something like it. What of it?"

"Do you see that bed hanging from yon window?"

"Yes! of course I see it!"

"It is a feather-bed!"

"Well—what of that? Why tell me this stuff? Of course I can guess as well as you that it's a feather-bed, since I see a flock of geese in the yard with their necks all bare."

"Hark ye, then! There's something more than this, which you may yet see! Touch up your mare. If this

fellow brings the mob at Ellisland upon us, that tar will be run, and that feather-bed gutted, for our benefit. What they took from the geese will be bestowed on us. Do you understand me? Did you ever hear of a man whose coat was made of tar and feathers, and furnished at the expense of the county?”

“Hush, for God’s sake, Warham! you make my blood run cold with your hideous notions!”

“That fellow offered to frizzle your whiskers. These would anoint them with tar, in which your bear’s oil would be of little use.”

“Ha! don’t you hear a noise?” demanded the whiskered companion, looking behind him.

“I think I do,” replied the other musingly.

“A great noise!” continued Don Whiskerandos.

“Yes, it seems to me that it is a great noise.”

“Like people shouting?”

“Somewhat—yes, by my soul, that *does* sound something like a shout!”

“And there! Don’t stop to look and listen, Warham,” cried his companion; “it’s no time for meditation. They’re coming! hark!—” and with a single glance behind him—with eyes dilating with the novel apprehensions of receiving a garment, unsolicited, bestowed by the bounty of the county—he drove his spurs into the flanks of his mare, and went ahead like an arrow. Stevens smiled in spite of his vexation.

“D—n him!” he muttered as he rode forward, “it’s some satisfaction, at least, to scare the soul out of him!”

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE REVELATION.

HAVING seen his enemy fairly mounted, and under way, as he thought, for Charlemont, Ned Hinkley returned to Ellisland for his own horse. Here he did not suffer himself to linger, though, before he could succeed in taking his departure, he was subjected to a very keen and searching examination by the village publican and politician. Having undergone this scrutiny with tolerable patience, if not to the entire satisfaction of the examiner, he set forward at a free canter, determined that his adversary should not be compelled to wait.

It was only while he rode that he began to fancy the possibility of the other having taken a different course; but as, upon reflection, he saw no other plan which he might have adopted—for lynching for suspected offences was not yet a popular practice in and about Charlemont—he contented himself with the reflection that he had done all that could have been done; and if Alfred Stevens failed to keep his appointment, he, at least, was one of the losers. He would necessarily lose the chance of revenging an indignity, not to speak of the equally serious loss of that enjoyment which a manly fight usually gave to Ned Hinkley himself, and which, he accordingly assumed, must be an equal gratification to all other persons. When he arrived at Charlemont, he did not make his arrival known, but, repairing directly to the lake among the hills, he hitched his

horse, and prepared, with what patience he could command, to await the coming of the enemy.

The reader is already prepared to believe that the worthy rustic waited in vain. It was only with the coming on of night that he began to consider himself outwitted. He scratched his head impatiently, not without bringing away some shreds of the hair, jumped on his horse, and, without making many allowances for the rough and hilly character of the road, went off at a driving pace for the house of Uncle Hinkley. Here he drew up only to ask if Brother Stevens had returned.

“No!”

“Then, dang it! he never will return. He’s a skunk, uncle—as great a skunk as ever was in all Kentucky!”

“How! what!—what of Brother Stevens?” demanded the uncle, seconded by John Cross, who had only some two hours arrived at the village, and now appeared at the door. But Ned Hinkley was already off.

“He’s a skunk!—that’s all!”

His last words threw very little light over the mystery, and certainly gave very little satisfaction to his hearers. The absence of Alfred Stevens, at a time when John Cross was expected, had necessarily occasioned some surprise; but, of course, no apprehensions were entertained by either the worthy parson or the bigoted host that he could be detained by any cause whatsoever which he could not fully justify.

The next course of Ned Hinkley was for the cottage of Mr. Calvert. To the old man he gave a copious detail of all his discoveries—not only the heads of what he heard from the conspirators in the wood, but something of the terms of the dialogue. The gravity of Calvert increased as the other proceeded. He saw more deeply into the signification of certain portions of this dialogue than did the narrator; and when the latter, after having expressed his disappointment at the non-appearance of Stevens on the

field of combat, at least congratulated himself at having driven him fairly from the ground, the other shook his head mournfully.

"I am afraid it's too late, my son."

"Too late, gran'pa! How? Is it ever too late to send such a rascal a-packing?"

"It may be for the safety of some, my son."

"What! Margaret you mean? You think the poor fool of a girl's too far gone in love of him, do you?"

"If that were all, Ned—"

"Why, what more, eh? You don't mean!—"

The apprehensions of the simple, unsuspecting fellow, for the first time began to be awakened to the truth.

"I am afraid, my son, that this wretch has been in Charlemont too long. From certain words that you have dropped, as coming from Stevens, in speaking to his comrade, I should regard him as speaking the language of triumph for successes already gained."

"Oh, hardly! I didn't think so. If I had only guessed that he meant such a thing—though I can't believe it—I'd ha' dropped him without a word. I'd have given him the pacificator as well as the peace-breaker. Oh, no! I can't think it—I can't—I won't! Margaret Cooper is not a girl to my liking, but, Lord help us! she's too beautiful and too smart to suffer such a skunk, in so short a time, to get the whip-hand of her. No, gran'pa, I can't and won't believe it!"

"Yet, Ned, these words which you have repeated convey some such fear to my mind. It may be that the villain was only boasting to his companion. There are scoundrels in this world who conceive of no higher subject of boast than the successful deception and ruin of the artless and confiding. I sincerely hope that this may be the case now—that it was the mere brag of a profligate, to excite the admiration of his comrade. But when you speak of the beauty and the ~~scarceness~~ of this poor girl, as of securities

for virtue, you make a great mistake. Beauty is more apt to be a betrayer than a protector; and as for her talent, that is seldom a protection unless it be associated with humility. Hers was not. She was most ignorant where she was most assured. She knew just enough to congratulate herself that she was unlike her neighbors, and this is the very temper of mind which is likely to cast down its possessor in shame. I trust that she had a better guardian angel than either her beauty or her talents. I sincerely hope that she is safe. At all events, let me caution you not to hint the possibility of its being otherwise. We will take for granted that Stevens is a baffled villain."

"I only wish I had dropped him!"

"Better as it is."

"What! even if the poor girl is—"

"Ay, even then!"

"Why, gran'pa, can it be possible *you* say so?"

"Yes, my son; I say so here, in moments of comparative calmness, and in the absence of the villain. Perhaps, were he present, I should say otherwise."

"And *do* otherwise! You'd shoot him, gran'pa, as soon as I."

"Perhaps! I think it likely. But, put up your pistols, Ned. You have nobody now to shoot. Put them up, and let us walk over to your uncle's at once. It is proper that he and John Cross should know these particulars."

Ned agreed to go, but not to put up his pistols.

"For, you see, gran'pa, this rascal may return. His friend may have kept him in long talk. We may meet him coming into the village."

"It is not likely; but come along. Give me that staff, my son, and your arm on the other side. I feel that my eyes are no longer young."

"You could shoot still, gran'pa?"

"Not well."

"What, couldn't you hit a chap like Stevens between

the eyes at ten paces? I'm sure I could do it, blindfolded, by a sort of instinct."

And the youth, shutting his eyes, as if to try the experiment, drew forth one of his pistols from his bosom, and began to direct its muzzle around the room.

"There was a black spider *there*, gran'pa! I'm sure, taking him for Stevens, I could cut his web for him."

"You have cut that of Stevens himself, and his comb too, Ned."

"Yes, yes—but what a fool I was not to make it his gills!"

By this time the old man had got on his spencer, and, with staff in hand, declared himself in readiness. Ned Hinkley lowered his pistol with reluctance. He was very anxious to try the weapon and his own aim, on somebody or something. That black spider which lived so securely in the domicil of Mr. Calvert would have stood no chance in any apartment of the widow Hinkley. Even the "pacificator" would have been employed for its extermination, if, for no other reason, because of the fancied resemblance which it had always worn to Brother Stevens—a resemblance which occurred to him, perhaps, in consequence of the supposed similarity between the arts of the libertine and those for the entrapping of his victims which distinguish the labors of the spider.

The two were soon arrived at old Hinkley's, and the tale of Ned was told; but, such was the bigotry of the hearers, without securing belief.

"So blessed a young man!" said the old lady.

"A brand from the burning!" exclaimed Brother Cross.

"It's all an intention of Satan!" cried old Hinkley, "to prevent the consummation of a goodly work."

"We should not give our faith too readily to such devices of the enemy, Friend Calvert," said John Cross, paternally.

"I never saw anything in him that wasn't perfectly saint-

like," said Mrs. Hinkley. "He made the most heartfelt prayer, and the loveliest blessing before meat! I think I hear him now—'Lord, make us thankful'—with his eyes shut up so sweetly, and with such a voice."

"There are always some people, Brother Cross, to hate the saints of the Lord and to slander them! They lie in wait like thieves of the night, and roaring lions of the wilderness, seeking what they may devour."

"Ah," exclaimed Brother Cross, "how little do such know that they devour themselves; for whoso destroyeth his best friend is a devourer of himself."

"The blindness of Satan is upon them, and they do his work."

And thus—purr, purr, purr—they went on, to the end of the chapter. Poor Ned Hinkley found the whole kennel was upon him. Not only did they deny everything that could by possibility affect the fair fame of the absent brother, but, from defending him, they passed, with an easy transition, to the denunciation of those who were supposed to be his defamers. In this the worthy old man Calvert came in for his share.

"All this comes of your supporting that worthless boy of mine in defiance of my will," said old Hinkley. "You hate Brother Stevens because that boy hated him, and because I love him."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Hinkley," said Calvert, mildly. "I hate nobody; at the same time I suffer no mere prejudices to delude me against sight and reason."

"Ah!" said Brother Cross, gently, "it's that very reason, Brother Calvert, that ruins you worldlings. You must not rely on human reason. Build on faith, and you build on the Rock of Ages."

"I propose to use reason only in worldly matters, Mr. Cross," said the other; "for which use, only, I believe it was given us. I employ it in reference to a case of ordinary evidence, and I beg your regards now, while I draw your

attention to the use I make of it in the present instance. Will you hear me without interruption?"

"Surely, Brother Calvert, but call me not Mr. Cross. I am not a Mister. I am plain John Cross; by virtue of my business, a brother, if it so please you to esteem me. Call me Brother Cross, or Brother John Cross, or plain John Cross, either of these will be acceptable unto me."

"We are all brothers, or should be," said Calvert; "and it will not need that there should be any misunderstanding between us on so small a matter."

"The matter is not small in the eye of the Lord," said the preacher. "Titles of vanity become not us, and offend in his hearing."

The old teacher smiled, but proceeded.

"Now, Brother Cross, if you will hear me, I will proceed, according to my reason, to dwell upon the proofs which are here presented to you, of the worthlessness of this man, Alfred Stevens; and when you consider how much the feelings and the safety of the daughters of your flock depend upon the character of those moral and religious teachers to whom the care of them is intrusted, you will see, I think, the necessity of listening patiently, and determining without religious prejudice, according to the truth and reason of the case."

"I am prepared to listen patiently, Brother Calvert," said John Cross, clasping his hands together, setting his elbows down upon the table, shutting his eyes, and turning his face fervently up to heaven. Old Hinkley imitated this posture quite as nearly as he was able; while Mrs. Hinkley, sitting between the two, maintained a constant to-and-fro motion, first on one side, then on the other, as they severally spoke to the occasion, with her head deferentially bowing, like a pendulum, and with a motion almost as regular and methodical. The movements of her nephew, Ned Hinkley, were also a somewhat pleasant study, after a fashion of his own. Sitting in a corner, he amused himself by drawing forth his

“puppies,” and taking occasional aim at a candle or flower-pot ; and sometimes, with some irreverence, at the curved and rather extravagant proboscis of his worthy uncle, which, cocked up in air, was indeed something of a tempting object of sight to a person so satisfied of his skill in shooting as the young rustic. The parties being thus arranged in a fit attitude for listening, Mr. Calvert began somewhat after the following fashion : —

“ Our first knowledge of Alfred Stevens was obtained through Brother John Cross.”

“ And what better introduction would you have ?” demanded old Hinkley.

“ None,” said the other, “ if Brother Cross knew anything about the party he introduced. But it so happens, as we learn from Brother Cross himself, that the first acquaintance he had with Stevens was made upon the road, where Stevens played a trick upon him by giving him brandy to drink.”

“ No trick, Brother Calvert ; the young man gave it me as a medicine, took it as a medicine himself, and, when I bade him, threw away the accursed beverage.”

“ Ordinary men, governed by ordinary reason, Brother Cross, would say that Stevens knew very well what he was giving you, and that it was a trick.”

“ But only think, Mr. Calvert,” said Mrs. Hinkley, lifting her hands and eyes at the same moment, “ the blessed young man threw away the evil liquor the moment he was told to do so. What a sign of meekness was that !”

“ I will not dwell on this point,” was the reply of Calvert. “ He comes into our village and declares his purpose to adopt the profession of the preacher, and proceeds to his studies under the direction of Brother Cross.”

“ And didn’t he study them ?” demanded Mrs. Hinkley. “ Wasn’t he, late and early, at the blessed volume ? I heard him at all hours above stairs. Oh ! how often was he

on his bended knees in behalf of our sinful race, ungrateful and misbelieving that we are !”

“I am afraid, madam,” said Calvert, “that his studies were scarcely so profound as you think them. Indeed, I am at a loss to conceive how you should blind your eyes to the fact that the greater part of his time was spent among the young girls of the village.”

“And where is it denied,” exclaimed old Hinkley, “that the lambs of God should sport together ?”

“Do not speak in that language, I pray you, Mr. Hinkley,” said Calvert, with something of pious horror in his look ; “this young man was no lamb of God, but, I fear, as you will find, a wolf in the fold. It is, I say, very well known that he was constantly wandering, even till a late hour of the night, with one of the village maidens.”

“Who was that one, Brother Calvert ?” demanded John Cross.

“Margaret Cooper.”

“Hem !” said the preacher.

“Well, he quarrels with my young friend, the worthy son of Brother Hinkley——”

“Do not speak of that ungrateful cub. Brother Stevens did not quarrel with him. He quarrelled with Brother Stevens, and would have murdered him, but that I put in in time to save.”

“Say not so, Mr. Hinkley. I have good reason to believe that Stevens went forth especially to fight with William.”

“I would not believe it, if a prophet were to tell me it.”

“Nevertheless, I believe it. We found both of them placed at the usual fighting-distance.”

“Ah ! but where were Brother Stevens’s pistols ?”

“In his pocket, I suppose.”

“He had none. He was at a distance from my ungrateful son, and flying that he should not be murdered. The lamb under the hands of the butcher. And would you be-

lieve it, Brother Cross, he had gone forth only to counsel the unworthy boy—only to bring him back into the fold—gone forth at his own prayer, as Brother Stevens declared to Betsy, just before he went out.”

“I am of opinion that he deceived her and yourself.”

“Where were his pistols then?”

“He must have concealed them. He told Ned Hinkley, this very day, that he had pistols, but that they were here.”

“Run up, Betsy, to Brother Stevens’s room and see.”

The old lady disappeared. Calvert proceeded.

“I can only repeat my opinion, founded upon the known pacific and honorable character of William Hinkley, and certain circumstances in the conduct of Stevens, that the two did go forth, under a previous arrangement, to fight a duel. That they were prevented, and that Stevens had no visible weapon, is unquestionably true. But I do not confine myself to these circumstances. This young man writes a great many letters, it is supposed to his friends, but never puts them in the post here, but every Saturday rides off, as we afterward learn, to the village of Ellisland, where he deposits them and receive others. This is a curious circumstance, which alone should justify suspicion.

“The ways of God are intricate, Brother Calvert,” said John Cross, “and we are not to suspect the truth which we can not understand.”

“But these are the ways of man, Brother Cross.”

“And the man of God is governed by the God which is in him. He obeys a law which, perhaps, is ordered to be hidden from thy sight.”

“This doctrine certainly confers very extraordinary privileges upon the man of God,” said Calvert, quietly, “and, perhaps, this is one reason why the profession is so prolific of professors now-a-days; but the point does not need discussion. Enough has been shown to awaken suspicion and doubt in the case of any ordinary person; and I now come

to that portion of the affair which is sustained by the testimony of Ned Hinkley, our young friend here, who, whatever his faults may be, has been always regarded in Charlemont, as a lover and speaker of the truth."

"Ay, ay, so far as he knows what the truth is," said old Hinkley, scornfully.

"And I'm just as likely to know what the truth is as you, uncle!" retorted the young man, rising and coming forward from his corner.

"Come, come," he continued, "you're not going to ride rough shod over me as you did over Cousin Bill. I don't care a snap of the finger, I can tell you, for all your puffed cheeks and big bellied speeches. I don't, I tell you!" and suiting the action to the word; the sturdy fellow snapped his fingers almost under the nose of his uncle, which was now erected heavenward, with a more scornful pre-eminence than ever. The sudden entrance of Mrs. Hinkley, from her search after Stevens's pistols, prevented any rough issue between these new parties, as it seemed to tell in favor of Stevens. There were no pistols to be found. The old lady did not add, indeed, that there was nothing of any kind to be found belonging to the same worthy.

"There! That's enough!" said old Hinkley.

"Did you find anything of Stevens's, Mrs. Hinkley?" inquired Mr. Calvert.

"Nothing, whatever."

"Well, madam," said Calvert, "your search, if it proves anything, proves the story of Ned Hinkley conclusively. This man has carried off all his chattels."

John Cross looked down from heaven, and stared inquiringly at Mrs. Hinkley.

"Is this true? Have you found nothing, Sister Betsy?"

"Nothing."

"And Brother Stevens has not come back?"

"No!"

"And reason for it, enough," said old Hinkley. "Did'nt

you hear that Ned Hinkley threatened to shoot him if he came back?"

"Look you, 'uncle," said the person thus accused, "if you was anybody else, and a little younger, I'd thrash you for that speech the same as if it was a lie! I would."

"Peace!" said Calvert, looking sternly at the youth. Having obtained temporary silence, he was permitted at length to struggle through his narrative, and to place, in their proper lights, all the particulars which Ned Hinkley had obtained at Ellisiand. When this was done the discussion was renewed, and raged, with no little violence, for a full hour. At length it ceased through the sheer exhaustion of the parties. Calvert was the first to withdraw from it, as he soon discovered that such was the bigotry of old Hinkley and his wife, and even of John Cross himself, that nothing short of divine revelation could persuade them of the guilt of one who had once made a religious profession.

Brother Cross, though struck with some of the details which Calvert had given, was afterward prepared to regard them as rather trivial than otherwise, and poor Ned was doomed to perceive that the conviction was general in this holy family, that he had, by his violence, and the terror which his pistols had inspired, driven away, in desperation, the most meek and saintly of all possible young apostles. The youth was nearly furious ere the evening and the discussion were over. It was very evident to Calvert that nothing was needed, should Stevens come back, but a bold front and a lying tongue, to maintain his position in the estimation of the flock, until such time as the truth *would* make itself known—a thing which, eventually, always happens. That night Ned Hinkley dreamed of nothing but of shooting Stevens and his comrade and of thrashing his uncle. What did Margaret Cooper dream of?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

STORM AND CONVULSION.

WHAT did Margaret Cooper dream of? Disappointment, misery, death. There was a stern presentiment in her waking thoughts, sufficiently keen and agonizing to inspire such dreadful apprehensions in her dreams. The temperament which is sanguine, and which, in a lively mood, inspires hope, is, at the same time, the source of those dark images of thought and feeling, which appal it with the most terrifying forms of fear; and when Saturday and Saturday night came and passed, and Alfred Stevens did not appear, a lurking dread that would not be chidden or kept down, continued to rise within her soul, which, without assuming any real form or decisive speech, was yet suggestive of complete overthrow and ruin.

Her dreams were of this complexion. She felt herself abandoned. Nor merely abandoned. She was a victim. In her desolation she had even lost her pride. She could no longer meet the sneer with scorn. She could no longer carry a lofty brow among the little circle, who, once having envied, were now about to despise her. To the impatient spirit, once so strong—so insolent in its strength—what a pang—what a humiliation was here! In her dreams she saw the young maidens of the village stand aloof, as she had once stood aloof from them:—she heard the senseless titter of their laugh; and she had no courage to resent the impertinence. Her courage was buried in

ner shame. No heart is so cowardly as that which is conscious of guilt. Picture after picture of this sort did her fancy present to her that night; and when she awoke the next morning, the sadness of her soul had taken the color of a deep and brooding misanthropy. Such had been the effect of her dreams. Her resolution came only from despair; and resolution from such a source, we well know, is usually only powerful against itself.

It is one proof of a religious instinct, and of a universal belief in a controlling and benevolent Deity, that all men however abased, scornful of divine and human law, invariably, in their moments of desperation, call upon God. Their first appeal is, involuntarily, to him. The outlaw, as the fatal bullet pierces his breast—the infidel, sinking and struggling in the water—the cold stony heart of the murderer, the miser, the assassin of reputation as of life—all cry out upon God in the unexpected paroxysms of death. Let us hope that the instinct which prompts this involuntary appeal for mercy, somewhat helps to secure its blessings. It is thus also with one who, in the hey-day of the youthful heart, has lived without thought or prayer—a tumultuous life of uproar and riot—a long carnival of the passions—the warm blood suppressing the cool thought, and making the reckless heart impatient of consideration. Let the sudden emergency arise, with such a heart—let the blood become stagnant with disease—and the involuntary appeal is to that God, of whom before there was no thought. We turn to him as to a father who is equally strong to help and glad to preserve us.

Margaret Cooper, in the ordinary phrase, had lived without God. Her God was in her own heart, beheld by the lurid fires of an intense, unmethodized ambition. Her own strength—or rather the persuasion of her own strength—had been so great, that hitherto she had seen no necessity for appealing to any other source of power. She might now well begin to distrust that strength. She did so. Her

desperation was not of that sort utterly to shut out hope ; and, while there is hope, there is yet a moral assurance that the worst is not yet—perhaps not to be. But she was humbled—not enough, perhaps—but enough to feel the necessity of calling in her allies. She dropped by her bedside, in prayer, when she arose that morning. We do not say that she prayed for forgiveness, without reference to her future earthly desires. Few of us know how to simplify our demands upon the Deity to this one. We pray that he may assist us in this or that grand speculation : the planter for a great crop ; the banker for investments that give him fifty per cent. ; the lawyer for more copious fees ; the parson for an increase of salary. How few pray for mercy—forgiveness for the past—strength to sustain the struggling conscience in the future ! Poor Margaret was no wiser, no better, than the rest of us. She prayed—silly woman !—that Alfred Stevens might keep his engagement !

He did not ! That day she was to be married ! She had some reference to this in making her toilet that morning. The garments which she put on were all of white. A white rose gleamed palely from amid the raven hair upon her brow. Beautiful was she, exceedingly. How beautiful ! but alas ! the garb she wore—the pale, sweet flower on her forehead—they were mockeries—the emblems of that purity of soul, that innocence of heart, which were gone—gone for ever ! She shuddered as she beheld the flower, and meditated this thought. Silently she took the flower from her forehead, and, as if it were precious as that lost jewel of which it reminded her, she carefully placed it away in her toilet-case.

Yet her beauty was heightened rather than diminished. Margaret Cooper was beautiful after no ordinary mould. Tall in stature, with a frame rounded by the most natural proportions into symmetry, and so formed for grace ; with a power of muscle more than common among women, which,

by inducing activity, made her movements as easy as they were graceful; with an eye bright like the morning-star, and with a depth of expression darkly clear, like that of the same golden orb at night; with a face exquisitely oval; a mouth of great sweetness; cheeks on which the slightest dash of hue from the red, red rose in June, might be seen to come and go under the slightest promptings of the active heart within; a brow of great height and corresponding expansion; with a bust that impressed you with a sense of the maternal strength which might be harbored there, even as the swollen bud gives promises of the full-bosomed luxuriance of the flower when it opens: add to these a lofty carriage, a look where the quickened spirit seems ever ready for utterance; a something of eager solemnity in her speech; and a play of expression on her lips which, if the brow were less lofty and the eye less keenly bright, might be a smile—and you have some idea of that noble and lovely temple on which fires of lava had been raised by an unholy hand; in which a secret worship is carried on which dreads the light, shrinks from exposure, and trembles to be seen by the very Deity whose favor it yet seeks in prayer and apprehension.

These beauties of person as we have essayed, though most feebly, to describe them, were enhanced rather than lessened by that air of anxiety by which they were now overcast. Her step was no longer free. It was marked by an unwonted timidity. Her glance was no longer confident; and when she looked round upon the faces of the young village-maidens, it was seen that her lip trembled and moved, but no longer with scorn. If the truth were told, she now envied the meanest of those maidens that security which her lack of beauty had guaranteed. She, the scorner of all around her, now envied the innocence of the very meanest of her companions.

Such was the natural effect of her unhappy experience

upon her heart. What would she not have given to be like one of them? She dared not take her place, in the church, among them. It was a dread that kept her back. Strange, wondrous power of innocence! The guilty girl felt that she might be repulsed; that her frailty might make itself known—*must* make itself known; and she would be driven with shame from that communion with the pure to which she had no longer any claim! She sunk into one of the humblest seats in the church, drawing her reluctant mother into the lowly place beside her.

John Cross did not that day address himself to her case: but sin has a family similitude among all its members. There is an unmistakeable likeness, which runs through the connection. If the preacher speaks fervently to one sin, he is very apt to goad, in some degree, all the rest: and though Brother Cross had not the most distant idea of singling out Margaret Cooper for his censure, yet there was a whispering devil at her elbow that kept up a continual commentary upon what he said, filling her ears with a direct application of every syllable to her own peculiar instance.

“See you not,” said the demon, “that every eye is turned upon you? He sees into your soul; he knows your secret. He declares it, as you hear, aloud, with a voice of thunder, to all the congregation. Do you not perceive that you sit alone; that everybody shrinks from your side; that your miserable old mother alone sits with you; that the eyes of some watch you with pity, but more with indignation? Look at the young damsels—late your companions—they are your companions no longer! They triumph in your shame. Their titter is only suppressed because of the place in which they are. They ask: ‘Is this the maiden who was so wise, so strong—who scorned us—scorned *us*, indeed!—and was not able to baffle the serpent in his very first approaches?’ Ha! ha! How they laugh! Well, indeed, they may. It is very laughable, Margaret—not less laughable and amusing than strange!—that *you* should have fallen!

—so easily, so blindly—and not even to suspect what every one else was sure of! O Margaret! Margaret! can it be true? Who will believe in your wit now, your genius, your beauty? Smutched and smutted! Poor, weak, degraded! If there is pity for you, Margaret, it is full of mockery too; it is a pity that is full of bitterness. You should now cast yourself down, and cover yourself with ashes, and cry, ‘Wo is me!’ and call upon the rocks and the hills to cover you!”

Such was the voice in her soul, which to *her* senses seemed like that of some jibing demon at her elbow. Margaret tried to pray—to expel him by prayer; but the object of his mockery had not been attained. She could not surrender herself entirely to the chastener. She was scourged, but not humbled; and the language of the demon provoked defiance, not humility. Her proud spirit rose once more against the pressure put upon it. Her bright, dazzling eye flashed in scorn upon the damsels whom she now fancied to be actually tittering—scarcely able to suppress their laughter—at her obvious disgrace. On John Cross she fixed her fearless eye, like that of some fallen angel, still braving the chastener, whom he can not contend with. A strange strength—for even sin has its strength for a season—came to her relief in that moment of fiendish mockery. The strength of an evil spirit was accorded her. Her heart once more swelled with pride. Her soul once more insisted on its ascendancy. She felt, though she did not say:—

“Even as I am, overthrown, robbed of my treasure, I feel that I am superior to these. I feel that I have strength against the future. If they are pure and innocent, it is not because of their greater strength, but their greater obscurity. If I am overthrown by the tempter, it was because I was the more worthy object of overthrow. In their littleness they live: if I am doomed to the shaft, at least it will be as the eagle is doomed; it will be while soaring aloft—

while aiming for the sun—while grasping at the very bolt by which I am destroyed!”

Such was the consolation offered by the twin-demons of pride and vanity. The latter finds its aliment in the heart which it too completely occupies, even from those circumstances which, in other eyes, make its disgrace and weakness. The sermon which had touched her sin had not subdued it. Perhaps no sermon, no appeal, however powerful and touching, could at that moment have had power over her. The paroxysm of her first consciousness of ruin had not yet passed off. The condition of mind was not yet reached in which an appeal could be felt.

As in the case of physical disease, so with that of the mind and heart, there is a period when it is neither useful nor prudent to administer the medicines which are yet most necessary to safety. The judicious physician will wait for the moment when the frame is prepared—when the pulse is somewhat subdued—before he tries the most powerful remedy. The excitement of the wrong which she had suffered was still great in her bosom. It was necessary that she should have repose. That excitement was maintained by the expectation that Stevens would yet make his appearance. Her eye, at intervals, wandered over the assembly in search of him. The demon at her elbow understood her quest.

“He will not come,” it said; “you look in vain. The girls follow your eyes; they behold your disappointment; they laugh at your credulity. If he leads any to the altar, think you it will be one whom he could command at pleasure without any such conditions—one who, in her wild passions and disordered vanity, could so readily yield to his desires, without demanding any corresponding sacrifices? Margaret, they laugh now at those weaknesses of a mind which they once feared if not honored. They wonder, now, that they could have been so deceived. If they do not laugh aloud, Margaret, it is because they would spare your shame. Indeed, indeed, they pity you!”

The head of the desperate, but still haughty woman, was now more proudly uplifted, and her eyes shot forth yet fiercer fires of indignation. What a conflict was going on in her bosom. Her cheeks glowed with the strife—her breast heaved; with difficulty she maintained her seat inflexibly, and continued, without other signs of discomposure, until the service was concluded. Her step was more stately than ever as she walked from church; and while her mother lingered behind to talk with Brother Cross, and to exchange the sweetest speeches with the widow Thackeray and others, she went on alone—seeing none, heeding none—dreading to meet any face lest it should wear a smile and look the language in which the demon at her side still dealt. *He* still clung to her, with the tenacity of a fiendish purpose. He mocked her with her shame, goading her, with dart upon dart, of every sort of mockery. Truly did he mutter in her ears:—

“Stevens has abandoned you. Never was child, before yourself, so silly as to believe such a promise as he made you. Do you doubt?—do you still hope? It is madness? Why came he not yesterday—last night—to-day? He is gone. He has abandoned you. You are not only alone—you are lost! lost for ever!”

The tidings of this unsolicited attendant were confirmed the next day, by the unsuspecting John Cross. He came to visit Mrs. Cooper and her daughter among the first of his parishioners. He had gathered from the villagers already that Stevens had certainly favored Miss Cooper beyond all the rest of the village damsels. Indeed, it was now generally bruited that he was engaged to her in marriage. Though the worthy preacher had very stoutly resisted the suggestions of Mr. Calvert, and the story of Ned Hinkley, he was yet a little annoyed by them; and he fancied that, if Stevens were, indeed, engaged to Margaret, she, or perhaps the old lady, might relieve his anxiety by accounting for the absence of his *protégé*. The notion of

Brother John was, that, having resolved to marry the maiden, he had naturally gone home to apprise his parents and to make the necessary preparations.

But this conjecture brought with it a new anxiety. It now, for the first time, seemed something strange that Stevens had never declared to himself, or to anybody else who his parents were—what they were—where they were—what business they pursued; or anything about them. Of his friends, they knew as little. The simple old man had never thought of these things, until the propriety of such inquiries was forced upon him by the conviction that they would now be made in vain. The inability to answer them, when it was necessary that an answer should be found, was a commentary upon his imprudence which startled the good old man not a little. But, in the confident hope that a solution of the difficulty could be afforded by the sweetheart or the mother, he proceeded to her cottage. Of course, Calvert, in his communication to him, had forborne those darker conjectures which he could not help but entertain; and his simple auditor, unconscious himself of any thought of evil, had never himself formed any such suspicions.

Margaret Cooper was in her chamber when Brother Cross arrived. She had lost that elasticity of temper which would have carried her out at that period among the hills in long rambles, led by those wild, wooing companions, which gambol along the paths of poetic contemplation. The old man opened his stores of scandal to Mrs. Cooper with little or no hesitation. He told her all that Calvert had said, all that Ned Hinkley had fancied himself to have heard, and all the village tattle touching the engagement supposed to exist between Stevens and her daughter.

“Of course, Sister Cooper,” said he, “I believe nothing of this sort against the youth. I should be sorry to think it of one whom I plucked as a brand from the burning. I

hold Brother Stevens to be a wise young man and a pious ; and truly I fear, as indeed I learn, that there is in the mind of Ned Hinkley a bitter dislike to the youth, because of some quarrel which Brother Stevens is said to have had with William Hinkley. This dislike hath made him conceive evil things of Brother Stevens and to misunderstand and to pervert some conversation which he hath overheard which Stevens hath had with his companion. Truly, indeed, I think that Alfred Stevens is a worthy youth of whom we shall hear a good account."

"And I think so too, Brother Cross. Brother Stevens will be yet a burning and a shining light in the church. There is a malice against him ; and I think I know the cause, Brother Cross."

"Ah ! this will be a light unto our footsteps, Sister Cooper."

"Thou knowest, Brother Cross," resumed the old lady in a subdued tone but with a loftier elevation of eyebrows and head—"thou knowest the great beauty of my daughter Margaret?"

"The maiden is comely, sister, comely among the maidens ; but beauty is grass. It is a flower which blooms at morning and is cut down in the evening. It withereth on the stalk where it bloomed, until men turn from it with sickening and with sorrow, remembering what it hath been. Be not boastful of thy daughter's beauty, Sister Cooper it is the beauty of goodness alone which dieth not."

"But said I not, Brother Cross, of her wisdom, and her wit, as well as her beauty?" replied the old lady with some little pique. "I was forgetful of much, if I spoke only of the beauty of person which Margaret Cooper surely possesseth, and which the eyes of blindness itself might see."

"Dross, dross all, Sister Cooper. The wit of man is a flash which blindeth and maketh dark ; and the wisdom of man is a vain thing. The one crackleth like thorns beneath

the pot—the other stifles the heart and keeps down the soul from her true flight. I count the wit and wisdom of thy daughter even as I count her beauty. She hath all, I think—as they are known to and regarded by men. But all is nothing. Beauty hath a day's life like the butterfly; wit shineth like the sudden flash of the lightning, leaving only the cloud behind it; and oh! for the vain wisdom of man which makes him vain and unsteady—likely to falter—liable to fall—rash in his judgment—erring in his aims—blind to his duty—wilful in his weakness—insolent to his fellow—presumptuous in the sight of God. Talk not to me of worldly wisdom. It is the foe to prayer and meekness. The very fruit of the tree which brought sin and death into the world. Thy daughter is fair to behold—very fair among the maidens of our flock—none fairer, none so fair: God hath otherwise blessed her with a bright mind and a quick intelligence; but I think not that she is wise to salvation. No, no! she hath not yearned to the holy places of the tabernacle, unless it be that Brother Stevens hath been more blessed in his ministry than I!”

“And he hath!” exclaimed the mother. “I tell you, Brother John, the heart of Margaret Cooper is no longer what it was. It is softened. The toils of Brother Stevens have not been in vain. Blessed young man, no wonder they hate and defame him. He hath had a power over Margaret Cooper such as man never had before; and it is for this reason that Bill Hinkley and Ned conspired against him, first to take his life, and then to speak evil of his deeds. They beheld the beauty of my daughter, and they looked on her with famishing eyes. She sent them a packing, I tell you. But this youth, Brother Stevens, found favor in her heart. They beheld the two as they went forth together. Ah! Brother John, it is the sweetest sight to behold two young, loving people walk forth in amity—born, as it would seem, for each other; both so tall, and young, and handsome; walking together with such smiles,

as if there was no sorrow in the world ; as if there was nothing but flowers and sweetness on the path ; as if they could see nothing but one another ; and as if there were no enemies looking on. It did my heart good to see them, Brother Cross ; they always looked so happy with one another."

"And you think, Sister Cooper, that Brother Stevens hath agreed to take Margaret to wife?"

"She hath not told me this yet, but in truth, I think it hath very nigh come to that."

"Where is she?"

"In her chamber."

"Call her hither, Sister Cooper ; let us ask of her the truth."

Margaret Cooper was summoned, and descended with slow steps and an unwilling spirit to meet their visiter.

"Daughter," said the good old man, taking her hand, and leading her to a seat, "thou art, even as thy mother sayest, one of exceeding beauty. Few damsels have ever met mine eyes with a beauty like to thine. No wonder the young men look on thee with eyes of love ; but let not the love of youth betray thee. The love of God is the only love that is precious to the heart of wisdom."

Thus saying, the old man gazed on her with as much admiration as was consistent with the natural coldness of his temperament, his years, and his profession. His address, so different from usual, had a soothing effect upon her. A sigh escaped her, but she said nothing. He then proceeded to renew the history which had been given to him and which he had already detailed to her mother. She heard him with patience, in spite of all his interpolations from Scripture, his ejaculations, his running commentary upon the narrative, and the numerous suggestive topics which took him from episode to episode, until the story seemed interminably mixed up in the digression.

But when he came to that portion which related to the

adventure of Ned Hinkley, to his espionage, the conference of Stevens with his companion—then she started—then her breathing became suspended, then quickened—then again suspended—and then, so rapid in its rush, that her emotion became almost too much for her powers of suppression.

But she did suppress it, with a power, a resolution, not often paralleled among men—still more seldom among women. After the first spasmodic acknowledgment given by her surprise, she listened with comparative calmness. She, alone, had the key to that conversation. She, alone, knew its terrible signification. She knew that Ned Hinkley was honest—was to be believed—that he was too simple, and too sincere, for any such invention; and, sitting with hands clasped upon that chair—the only attitude which expressed the intense emotion which she felt—she gazed with unembarrassed eye upon the face of the speaker, while every word which he spoke went like some keen, death-giving instrument into her heart.

The whole dreadful history of the villany of Stevens, her irreparable ruin—was now clearly intelligible. The mocking devil at her elbow had spoken nothing but the truth. She was indeed the poor victim of a crafty villain. In the day of her strength and glory she had fallen—fallen, fallen, fallen!

“Why am I called to hear this?” she demanded with singular composure.

The old man and the mother explained in the same breath—that she might reveal the degree of intercourse which had taken place between them, and, if possible, account for the absence of her lover. That, in short, she might refute the malice of enemies and establish the falsehood of their suggestions.

“You wish to know if I believe this story of Ned Hinkley?”

“Even so, my daughter.”

“Then, I do!”

“Ha! what is it you say, Margaret?”

“The truth.”

“What?” demanded the preacher, “you can not surely mean that Brother Stevens hath been a wolf in sheep’s clothing—that he hath been a hypocrite.”

“Alas!” thought Margaret Cooper—“have I not been my own worst enemy—did I not know him to be this from the first?”

Her secret reflection remained, however, unspoken. She answered the demand of John Cross without a moment’s hesitation.

“I believe that Alfred Stevens is all that he is charged to be—a hypocrite—a wolf in sheep’s clothing!—I see no reason to doubt the story of Ned Hinkley. He is an honest youth.”

The old lady was in consternation. The preacher aghast and confounded.

“Tell me, Margaret,” said the former, “hath he not engaged himself to you? Did he not promise—is he not sworn to be your husband?”

“I have already given you my belief. I see no reason to say anything more. What more do you need? Is he not gone—fled—has he not failed——”

She paused abruptly, while a purple flush went over her face. She rose to retire.

“Margaret!” exclaimed the mother.

“My daughter!” said John Cross.

“Speak out what you know—tell us all——”

“No! I will say no more. You know enough already. I tell you, I believe Alfred Stevens to be a hypocrite and a villain. Is not that enough? What is it to you whether he is so or not? What is it to me, at least? You do not suppose that it is anything to me? Why should you? What should he be? I tell you he is nothing to me—nothing—nothing—nothing! Villain or hypocrite, or

what not — he is no more to me than the earth on which I tread. Let me hear no more about him, I pray you. I would not hear his name! Are there not villains enough in the world, that you should think and speak of one only?"

With these vehement words she left the room, and hurried to her chamber. She stopped suddenly before the mirror.

"And is it thus!" she exclaimed — "and I am——"

The mother by this time had followed her into the room.

"What is the meaning of this, Margaret?—tell me!" cried the old woman in the wildest agitation.

"What should it be, mother? Look at me!—in my eyes—do they not tell you? Can you not read?"

"I see nothing—I do not understand you, Margaret."

"Indeed! but you shall understand me! I thought my face would tell you without my words. *I* see it there, legible enough, to myself. Look again!—spare me if you can—spare your own ears the necessity of hearing me speak!"

"You terrify me, Margaret—I fear you are out of your mind.

"No! no! that need not be your fear; nor, were it true, would it be a fear of mine. It might be something to hope—to pray for. It might bring relief. Hear me, since you will not see. You ask me why I believe Stevens to be a villain. *I know it.*"

"Ha! how know it!"

"How! How should I know it? Well, I see that I must speak. Listen then. You bade me seek and make a conquest of him, did you not? Do not deny it, mother—you did."

"Well, if I did?"

"I succeeded! Without trying, I succeeded! He de-

clared to me his love—he did!—he promised to marry me. He was to have married me yesterday—to have met me in church and married me. John Cross was to have performed the ceremony. Well! you saw me there—you saw me in white—the dress of a bride!—Did he come? Did you see him there? Did you see the ceremony performed?”

“No, surely not—you know without asking.”

“I know without asking!—surely I do!—but look you, mother—do you think that conquests are to be made, hearts won, loves confessed, pledges given, marriage-day fixed—do these things take place, as matters of pure form? Is there no sensation—no agitation—no beating and violence about the heart—in the blood—in the brain! I tell you there is—a blinding violence, a wild, stormy, sensation—fondness, forgetfulness, madness! I say, madness! madness! madness!”

“Oh, my daughter, what can all this mean? Speak calmly, be deliberate!”

“Calm! deliberate! What a monster if I could be! But I am not mad now. I will tell you what it means. It means that, in taking captive Alfred Stevens—in winning a lover—securing that pious young man—there was some difficulty, some peril. Would you believe it?—there were some privileges which he claimed. He took me in his arms. Ha! ha! He held me panting to his breast. His mouth filled mine with kisses——”

“No more, do not say more, my child!”

“Ay, more! more! much more! I tell you—then came blindness and madness, and I was dishonored—made a woman before I was made a wife! Ruined, lost, abused, despised, abandoned! Ha! ha! ha! no marriage ceremony. Though I went to the church. No bridegroom there, though he promised to come. Preacher, church, bride, all present, yet no wedding. Ha! ha! ha! How

do I know!—Good reason for it, good reason—Ha! ha! —ah!”

The paroxysm terminated in a convulsion. The unhappy girl fell to the floor as if stricken in the forehead. The blood gushed from her mouth and nostrils, and she lay insensible in the presence of the terrified and miserable mother.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FATES FIND THE DAGGER AND THE BOWL.

For a long time she lay without showing any signs of life. Her passions rebelled against the restraint which her mind had endeavored to put upon them. Their concentrated force breaking all bonds, so suddenly, was like the terrific outburst of the boiling lava from the gorges of the frozen mountain. Believing her dead, the mother rushed headlong into the highway, rending the village with her screams. She was for the time a perfect madwoman. The neighbors gathered to her assistance. That much-abused woman, the widow Thackeray, was the first to come. Never was woman's tenderness more remarkable than hers — never was woman's watch by the bed of sickness and suffering — that watch which woman alone knows so well how to keep — more rigidly maintained than by her! From the first hour of that agony under which Margaret Cooper fell to earth insensible, to the last moment in which her recovery was doubtful, that widow Thackeray — whose passion for a husband had been described by Mrs. Cooper as so very decided and evident — maintained her place by the sick bed of the stricken girl with all the affection of a mother. Widow Thackeray was a woman who could laugh merrily, but she could shed tears with equal readiness. These were equally the signs of prompt feeling and nice susceptibility; and the proud Margaret, and her invidious mother, were both humbled by that spontaneous kindness

for which, hitherto, they had given the possessor so very little credit, and to which they were now equally so greatly indebted.

Medical attendance was promptly secured. Charlemont had a very clever physician of the old school. He combined, as was requisite in the forest region of our country, the distinct offices of the surgeon and mediciner. He was tolerably skilful in both departments. He found his patient in a condition of considerable peril. She had broken a blood-vessel; and the nicest care and closest attendance were necessary to her preservation. It will not need that we should go through the long and weary details which followed to her final cure. Enough, that she did recover. But for weeks her chance was doubtful. She lay for that space of time, equally in the arms of life and death. For a long period, she herself was unconscious of her situation.

When she came to know, the skill of her attendants derived very little aid from her consciousness. Her mind was unfavorable to her cure; and this, by the way, is a very important particular in the fortunes of the sick. To despond, to have a weariness of life, to forbear hope as well as exertion, is, a hundred to one, to determine against the skill of the physician. Margaret Cooper felt a willingness to die. She felt her overthrow in the keenest pangs of its shame; and, unhappily, the mother, in her madness, had declared it.

The story of her fall—of the triumph of the serpent—was now the village property, and of course put an end to all further doubts on the score of the piety of Brother Stevens; though, by way of qualification of his offence, old Hinkley insisted that it was the fault of the poor damsel.

“She,” he said, “had tempted him—had thrown herself in his way—had been brazen,” and all that, of which so much is commonly said in all similar cases. We, who know the character of the parties, and have traced events

from the beginning, very well know how little of this is true. Poor Margaret was a victim before she was well aware of those passions which made her so. She was the victim not of lust but of ambition. Never was woman more unsophisticated—less moved by unworthy and sinister design. She had her weaknesses—her pride, her vanity; and her passions, which were tremendous, worked upon through these, very soon effected her undoing. But, for deliberate purpose of evil—of any evil of which her own intellect was conscious—the angels were not more innocent.

But mere innocence of evil design, in any one particular condition, is not enough for security. We are not only to forbear evil; virtue requires that we should be exercised for the purposes of good. She lacked the moral strength which such exercises, constantly pursued, would have assured her. She was a creature of impulse only, not of reflection. Besides, she was ignorant of her particular weaknesses. She was weak where she thought herself strong. This is always the error of a person having a very decided will. The will is constantly mistaken for the power. She could not humble herself, and in her own personal capacities—capacities which had never before been subjected to any ordeal-trial—she relied for the force which was to sustain her in every situation. Fancy a confident country-girl—supreme in her own district over the Hobs and Hinnies thereabouts—in conflict with the adroit man of the world, and you have the whole history of Margaret Cooper, and the secret of her misfortune. Let the girl have what natural talent you please, and the case is by no means altered. She must fall if she seeks or permits the conflict. She can only escape by flight. It is in consideration of this human weakness, that we pray God, nightly, not to suffer us to be exposed to temptation.

When the personal resources of her own experience and mind failed Margaret Cooper, as at some time or other

they must fail all who trust only in them, she had no further reliance. She had never learned to draw equal strength and consolation from the sweet counsels of the sacred volume. Regarding the wild raving and the senseless insanity, which are but too frequently the language of the vulgar preacher, as gross ignorance and debasing folly, she committed the unhappy error of confounding the preacher with his cause. She had never been taught to make an habitual reference to religion; and her own experience of life, had never forced upon her those sage reflections which would have shown her that *true* religion is the very all of life, and without it life has nothing. The humility of the psalmist, which was the real source of all the strength allotted to the monarch minstrel, was an unread lesson with her; and never having been tutored to refer to God, and relying upon her own proud mind and daring imagination, what wonder that these frail reeds should pierce her side while giving way beneath her.

It was this very confidence in her own strength—this fearlessness of danger (and we repeat the lesson here, emphatically, by way of warning)—a confidence which the possession of a quick and powerful mind naturally enough inspires—that effected her undoing. It was not by the force of her affections that she fell. *The affections are not apt to be strong in a woman whose mind leads her out from her sex!*

The seducer triumphed through the medium of her vanity. Her feeling of self-assurance had been thus active from childhood, and conspicuous in all her sports and employments. *She had never been a child herself. She led always in the pastimes of her playmates, many of whom were older than herself.*

She had no fears when others trembled; and, if she did not, at any time, so far transcend the bounds of filial duty as to defy the counsels of her parents, it was certainly no less true that she never sought for, and seldom seemed to

need them. *It is dangerous when the woman, through sheer confidence in her own strength, ventures upon the verge of the moral precipice. The very experiment, where the passions are concerned, proves her to be lost.*

Margaret Cooper, confident in her own footsteps, soon learned to despise every sort of guardianship. The vanity of her mother had not only counselled and stimulated her own, but was of that gross and silly order, as to make itself offensive to the judgment of the girl herself. This had the effect of losing her all the authority of a parent; and we have already seen, in the few instances where this authority took the shape of counsel, that its tendency was to evil rather than to good.

The arts of Alfred Stevens had, in reality, been very few. It was only necessary that he should read the character of his victim. This, as an experienced worldling—experienced in such a volume—he was soon very able to do. He saw enough to discover, that, while Margaret Cooper was endowed by nature with an extraordinary measure of intellect, she was really weak because of its possession. In due proportion to the degree of exercise to which she subjected her mere mind—making that busy and restless—was the neglect of her sensibilities—those nice *antennæ of the heart*.

“Whose instant touches, slightest pause,”

teach the approach of the smallest forms of danger, however inoffensive their shapes, however unobtrusive their advance. When the sensibilities are neglected and suffered to fall into disrepute, they grow idle first, and finally obtuse! even as the limb which you forbear to exercise loses its muscle, and withers into worthlessness.

When Alfred Stevens discovered this condition, his plan was simple enough. He had only to stimulate her mind into bolder exercise—to conduct it to topics of the utmost hardihood—to inspire that sort of moral recklessness which

some people call courage—which delights to sport along the edge of the precipice, and to summon audacious spirits from the great yawning gulfs which lie below. This practice is always pursued at the expense of those guardian feelings which keep watch over the virtues of the tender heart.

The analysis of subjects commonly forbidden to the sex, necessarily tends to make dull those habitual sentinels over the female conduct. These sentinels are instincts rather than principles. Education can take them away, but does not often confer them. When, through the arts of Alfred Stevens, Margaret Cooper was led to discuss, perhaps to despise, those nice and seemingly purposeless barriers which society—having the experience of ages for its authority—has wisely set up between the sexes—she had already taken a large stride toward passing them. But of this, which a judicious education would have taught her, she was wholly ignorant. Her mind was too bold to be scrupulous; too adventurous to be watchful; and if, at any moment, a pause in her progress permitted her to think of the probable danger to her sex of such adventurous freedom, she certainly never apprehended it in her own case. Such restraints she conceived to be essential only for the protection of *the weak* among her sex. Her vanity led her to believe that she was strong; and the approaches of the sapper were conducted with too much caution, with a progress too stealthy and insensible, to startle the ear or attract the eye of the unobservant, yet keen-eyed guardian of her citadel. An eagle perched upon a rock, with wing outspread for flight, and an eye fixed upon the rolling clouds through which it means to dart, is thus heedless of the coiled serpent which lies beneath its feet.

The bold eye of Margaret Cooper was thus heedless. Gazing upon the sun, she saw not the serpent at her feet. It was not because she slept: never was eye brighter, more

far-stretching ; never was mind more busy, more active, than that of the victim at the very moment when she fell. It was because she watched the remote, not the near—the region in which there was no enemy, nothing but glory—and neglected that post which is always in danger. Her error is that of the general who expends his army upon some distant province, leaving his chief city to the assault and sack of the invader.

We have dwelt somewhat longer upon the moral causes which, in our story, have produced such cruel results, than the mere story itself demands ; but no story is perfectly moral unless the author, with a wholesome commentary, directs the attention of the reader to the true weaknesses of his hero, to the point where his character fails ; to the causes of this failure, and the modes in which it may be repaired or prevented. In this way alone may the details of life and society be properly welded together into consistent doctrine, so that instruction may keep pace with delight, and the heart and mind be informed without being conscious of any of those tasks which accompany the lessons of experience.

To return now to our narrative.

Margaret Cooper lived ! She might as well have died. This was *her* thought, at least. She prayed for death. Was it in mercy that her prayer was denied ? We shall see ! Youth and a vigorous constitution successfully resisted the attacks of the assailant. They finally obtained the victory. After a weary spell of bondage and suffering, she recovered. But she recovered only to the consciousness of a new affliction. All the consequences of her fatal lapse from virtue have not yet been told. She bore within her an indelible witness of her shame. She was destined to be a mother without having been a wife !

This, to *her* mother at least, was a more terrible discovery than the former. She literally cowered and crouched beneath it. It was the *written* shame, rather than the

actual, which the old woman dreaded. She had been so vain, so criminally vain, of her daughter—she had made her so constantly the subject of her brag—that, unwitting of having declared the whole melancholy truth, in the first moment of her madness, she shrunk, with an unspeakable horror, from the idea that the little world in which she lived should become familiar with the whole cruel history of her overthrow. She could scarcely believe it herself, though the daughter, with an anguish in her eyes that left little to be told, had herself revealed the truth. Her pride, as well as her life, was linked with the pride and the beauty of her child. She had shared in her constant triumphs over all around her; and overlooking, as a fond, foolish mother is apt to do, all her faults of temper or of judgment, she had learned to behold nothing but her superiority. And now to see her fallen! a thing of scorn, which was lately a thing of beauty!—the despised, which was lately the worshipped and the wondered at! No wonder that her weak, vain heart was crushed and humbled, and her head bowed in sorrow to the earth. She threw herself upon the floor, and wept bitter and scalding tears.

The daughter had none. Without sob or sigh, she stooped down and tenderly assisted the old woman to rise. Why had she no tears? She asked herself this question, but in vain. Her external emotions promised none. Indeed, she seemed to be without emotions. A weariness and general indifference to all things was now the expression of her features. But this was the deceitful aspect of the mountain, on whose breast contemplation sits with silence, unconscious of the tossing flame which within is secretly fusing the stubborn metal and the rock. Anger was in her breast—feelings of hate mingled up with shame—scorn of herself, scorn of all—feelings of defiance and terror, striving at mastery; and, in one corner, a brooding image of despair, kept from the brink of the precipice only by the entreaties of some fiercer principle of hate. She felt life to be insup-

portable. Why did she live? This question came to her repeatedly. The demon was again at work beside her.

“Die!” said he. “It is but a blow—a moment’s pang—the driving a needle into an artery—the prick of a pin upon the heart. Die! it will save you from exposure—the shame of bringing into the world an heir of shame! What would you live for? The doors of love, and fame, even of society, are shut against you for ever. What is life to you now? a long denial—a protracted draught of bitterness—the feeling of a death-spasm carried on through sleepless years; perhaps, under a curse of peculiar bitterness, carried on even into age! Die! you can not be so base as to wish for longer life!”

The arguments of the demon were imposing. His suggestions seemed to promise the relief she sought. Hers seemed the particular case where the prayer is justified which invokes the mountains and the rocks upon the head of the guilty. But the rock refused to fall, the mountain to cover her shame, and its exposure became daily more and more certain. Death was the only mode of escape from the mountain of pain which seemed to rest upon her heart. The means of self-destruction were easy. With a spirit so impetuous as hers, to imagine was to determine. She did determine. Yet, even while making so terrible a resolve, a singular calm seemed to overspread her soul. She complained of nothing—wished for nothing—sought for nothing—trembled at nothing. A dreadful lethargy, which made the old mother declaim as against a singular proof of hardihood, possessed her spirit. Little did the still-idolizing mother conjecture how much that lethargy concealed!

The moment that Margaret Cooper conceived the idea of suicide, it possessed all her mind. It became the one only thought. There were few arguments against it, and these she rapidly dismissed or overcame. To leave her mother in her old age was the first which offered itself; but this

became a small consideration when she reflected that the latter could not, under any circumstances, require her assistance very long; and to spare her the shame of public exposure was another consideration. The evils of the act to herself were reduced with equal readiness to the transition from one state to another by a small process, which, whether by the name of stab or shot, was productive only of a momentary spasm; for, though as fully persuaded of the soul's immortality as the best of us, the unhappy girl, like all young free-thinkers, had persuaded herself that, in dying by her own hands, she was simply exercising a discretionary power under the conviction that her act in doing so was rendered by circumstances a judicious one. The arguments by which she deceived herself are sufficiently commonplace, and too easy of refutation, to render necessary any discussion of them here. Enough to state the fact. She deliberately resolved upon the fatal deed which was to end her life and agony together, and save her from that more notorious exposure which must follow the birth of that child of sin whom she deemed it no more than a charity to destroy.

There was an old pair of pistols in the house, which had been the property of her father. She had often, with a boldness not common to the sex, examined these pistols. They were of brass, well made, of English manufacture, with common muzzles, and a groove for a sight instead of the usual drop. They were not large, but, in a practised hand, were good travelling-pistols, being capable of bringing down a man at twelve paces, provided there was anything like deliberation in the holder. Often and again had she handled these weapons, poising them and addressing them at objects as she had seen her father do. On one occasion she had been made to discharge them, under his own instructions; she had done so without terror. She recalled these events. She had seen the pistols loaded. She did not exactly know what quantity of powder was necessary

for a charge, but she was in no mood to calculate the value of a thimbleful.

Availing herself of the temporary absence of her mother, she possessed herself of these weapons. Along with them, in the same drawer, she found a horn which still contained a certain quantity of powder. There were bullets in the bag with the pistols which precisely fitted them. There, too, was the mould—there were flints—the stock was sufficiently ample for all her desires; and she surveyed the prize, in her own room, with the look of one who congratulates himself in the conviction that he holds in his hand the great medicine which is to cure his disease. In her chamber she loaded the weapons, and, with such resignation as belonged to her philosophy, she waited for the propitious moment when she might complete the deed.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FOLDING THE ROBES ABOUT HER.

It was the sabbath and a very lovely day. The sun never shone more brightly in the heavens; and as Margaret Cooper surveyed its mellow orange light, lying, like some blessed spirit, at sleep upon the hills around her, and reflected that she was about to behold it for the last time, her sense of its exceeding beauty became more strong than ever. Now that she was about to lose it for ever, it seemed more beautiful than it had ever been before.

This is a natural effect, which the affections confer upon the objects which delight and employ them. Even a temporary privation increases the loveliness of the external nature. How we linger and look. That shade seems so inviting; that old oak so venerable! That rock—how often have we sat upon it, evening and morning, and mused strange, wild, sweet fancies! It is an effort to tear one's self away—it is almost like tearing away from life itself; so many living affections feel the rending and the straining—so many fibres that have their roots in the heart, are torn and lacerated by the separation.

Poor Margaret! she looked from her window upon the bright and beautiful world around her. Strange that sorrow should dwell in a world so bright and beautiful! Stranger still, that, dwelling in such a world, it should not dwell there by sufferance only and constraint! that it should have such sway—such privilege. That it should invade

every sanctuary and leave no home secure. Ah! but the difference between mere sorrow and guilt! Poor Margaret could not well understand that! If she could—but no! She was yet to learn that the sorrows of the innocent have a healing effect. That they produce a holy and ennobling strength, and a juster appreciation of those evening shades of life which render the lights valuable and make their uses pure. It is only guilt which finds life loathsome. It is only guilt that sorrow weakens and enslaves. Virtue grows strong beneath the pressure of her enemies, and with such a power as was fabled of the king of Pontus, turns the most poisonous fruits of earth into the most wholesome food.

But, even in the heart of Margaret Cooper, where the sense of the beautiful was strong, the loveliness of the scene was felt. She drank in, with strange satisfaction—a satisfaction to which she had long been a stranger—its soft and inviting beauties. They did not lessen her sense of suffering, perhaps, but they were not without their effect in producing other moods, which, once taken in company with the darker ones of the soul, may, in time, succeed in alleviating them. Never, indeed, had the prospect been more calm and wooing. Silence, bending from the hills, seemed to brood above the valley even as some mighty spirit, at whose bidding strife was hushed, and peace became the acknowledged divinity of all. The humming voices of trade and merriment were all hushed in homage to the holy day; and if the fitful song of a truant bird, that presumed beside the window of Margaret Cooper, did break the silence of the scene, it certainly did not disturb its calm. The forest minstrel sung in a neighboring tree, and she half listened to his lay. The strain seemed to sympathize with her sadness. She thought upon her own songs, which had been of such a proud spirit; and how strange and startling seemed the idea that with her, song would soon cease for ever. The song of the bird would be

silent in her ears, and her own song! What song would be hers? What strain would she take up? In what abode—before what altars?

This train of thought, which was not entirely lost, however, was broken, for the time, by a very natural circumstance. A troop of the village damsels came in sight, on their way to church. She forgot the song of birds, as her morbid spirit suggested to her the probable subject of their meditations.

"They have seen me," she muttered to herself as she hastily darted from the window. "Ay, they exult. They point to me—me, the abandoned—the desolate—soon to be the disgraced! But, no! no! that shall never be. They shall never have that triumph, which is always so grateful a subject of regale to the mean and envious!"

The voice of her mother from below disturbed these unhappy meditations. The old lady was prepared for church, and was surprised to find that Margaret had not made her toilet.

"What! don't you mean to go, Margaret?"

"Not to-day, mother."

"What, and the new preacher too, that takes the place of John Cross! They say he makes a most heavenly prayer."

But the inducement of the heavenly prayer of the new preacher was not enough for Margaret. The very suggestion of a new preacher would have been conclusive against her compliance. The good old lady was too eager herself to get under way to waste much time in exhortation, and hurrying off, she scarcely gave herself time to answer the inquiry of the widow Thackeray, at her own door, after the daughter's health.

"I will go in and see her," said the lighthearted but truehearted woman.

"Do, do, ma'am—if you please! She'll be glad to see you. I'll hurry on, as I see Mrs. Hinkley just ahead."

The widow Thackeray looked after her with a smile, which was exchanged for another of different character when she found herself in the chamber of Margaret. She put her arms about the waist of the sufferer; kissed her cheeks, and with the tenderest solicitude spoke of her health and comfort. To her, alone, with the exception of her mother—according to the belief of Margaret—her true situation had been made known.

“Alas!” said she, “how should I feel—how should I be! You should know. I am as one cursed—doomed, hopeless of anything but death.”

“Ah! do not speak of death, Margaret,” said the other kindly. “We must all die, I know, but that does not reconcile me any more to the thought. It brings always a creeping horror through my veins. Think of life—talk of life only.”

“They say that death is life.”

“So it is, I believe, Margaret; and now I think of it, dress yourself and go to church where we may hear something on this subject to make us wiser and better. Come, my dear—let us go to God.”

“I can not—not to-day, dear Mrs. Thackeray.”

“Ah, Margaret, why not? It is to the church, of all places, you should now go.”

“What! to be stared at? To see the finger of scorn pointing at me wherever I turn? To hear the whispered insinuation? To be conscious only of sneer and sarcasm on every hand? No, no, dear Mrs. Thackeray, I can not go for this. Feeling this, I should neither pray for myself, nor find benefit from the prayers of others. Nay, *they* would not pray. They would only mock.”

“Margaret, these thoughts are very sinful.”

“So they are, but I can not think of any better. They can not but be sinful since they are mine.”

But you are not wedded to sin, dearest. Such thoughts

can give you no pleasure. Come with me to church! Come and pray! Prayer will do you good."

"I would rather pray here. Let me remain. I will try to go out among the hills when you are all engaged in church, and will pray there. Indeed I must. I must pray then and pray there, if prayer is ever to do me good."

"The church is the better place, Margaret. One prays better where one sees that all are praying."

"But when I *know* that they are not praying! When I know that envy is in their hearts, and malice, and jealousy and suspicion—that God is not in their hearts, but their fellow; and not him with friendly and fond, but with spiteful and deceitful thoughts!"

"Ah! Margaret, how can you know this? Judge not lest ye be judged."

"It matters not, dear Mrs. Thackeray. God is here, or there. He will be among the hills if anywhere. I will seek him there. If I can command my thoughts anywhere, it will be in the woods alone. In the church I can not. Those who hate me are there—and their looks of hate would only move my scorn and defiance."

"Margaret, you do our people wrong. You do yourself wrong. None hate you—none will point to you, or think of your misfortune; and if they did, it is only what you might expect, and what you must learn patiently to bear, as a part of the punishment which God inflicts on sin. You must submit, Margaret, to the shame as you have submitted to the sin. It is by submission only that you can be made strong. The burden which you are prepared to bear meekly, becomes light to the willing spirit. Come, dear Margaret, I will keep with you, sit by you—show you, and all, that I forget your sin and remember only your suffering."

The good widow spoke with the kindest tones. She threw her arms around the neck of the desolate one, and kissed her with the affection of a sister. But the demon

of pride was uppermost. She withstood entreaty and embrace.

"I can not go with you. I thank you, truly thank you, dear Mrs. Thackeray, but I can not go. I have neither the courage nor the strength."

"They will come—the courage and the strength—only try. God is watchful to give us help the moment he sees that we really seek his assistance. By prayer, Margaret—"

"I will pray, but I must pray alone. Among the hills I will pray. My prayer will not be less acceptable offered among his hills. My voice will not remain unheard, though no chorus swells its appeal."

"Margaret, this is pride."

"Perhaps!"

"Ah! go with me, and pray for humility."

"My prayer would rather be for death."

"Say not so, Margaret—this is impiety."

"Ay, death!—the peace, the quiet of the grave—of a long sleep—an endless sleep—where the vulture may no longer gnaw the heart, nor the fire burn within the brain! For these I must pray."

And, thus speaking, the unhappy woman smote her throbbing head with violent hand.

"Shocking thought! But you do not believe in such a sleep? Surely, Margaret, you believe in life eternal?"

"Would I did not!"

"O Margaret!—but you are sick; you are very feverish. Your eyeballs glare like coals of fire; your face seems charged with blood. I am afraid you are going to have another attack, like the last."

"Be not afraid. I have no such fear."

"I will sit with you, at least," said the kind-hearted woman.

"Nay, that I must positively forbid, Mrs. Thackeray; I will not suffer it. I will not sit with *you*. Go you to

church. You will be late. Do not waste your time on me. I mean to ramble among the hills this morning. *That*, I think, will do me more good than anything else. There, I am sure—there only—I will find peace.”

The worthy widow shook her head doubtfully.

“But I am sure of it,” said Margaret. “You will see. Peace, peace—the repose of the heart—the slumber of the brain!—I shall find all there!”

Mrs. Thackeray, finding her inflexible, rose to depart, but with some irresoluteness.

“If you would let me walk with you, Margaret—”

“No! no!—dear Mrs. Thackeray—I thank you very much; but, with a mood such as mine, I shall be much better alone.”

“Well, if you are resolved—”

“I am resolved! never more so.”

These words were spoken in tones which might have startled a suspicious mind. But the widow was none.

“God bless you!” she said, kissing her at parting. “I will see you when I come from church.”

“Will you?” said Margaret, with a significant but sad smile. Then, suddenly rising, she exclaimed:—

“Let me kiss you, dear Mrs. Thackeray, and thank you again, before you go. You have been very kind to me, very kind, and you have my thanks and gratitude.”

Mrs. Thackeray was touched by her manner. This was the first time that the proud spirit of Margaret Cooper had ever offered such an acknowledgment. It was one that the gentle and unremitting kindnesses of the widow amply deserved. After renewing her promise to call on her return from church, Mrs. Thackeray took her departure.

Margaret Cooper was once more alone. When she heard the outer door shut, she then threw herself upon the bed, and gave way to the utterance of those emotions which, long restrained, had rendered her mind a terrible anarchy. A few tears, but very few, were wrung from her eyes; but

she groaned audibly, and a rapid succession of shivering-fits passed through her frame, racking the whole nervous system, until she scarcely found herself able to rise from the couch where she had thrown herself. A strong, determined will alone moved her, and she rose, after a lapse of half an hour, to the further prosecution of her purpose. Her temporary weakness and suffering of frame had no effect upon her resolves. She rather seemed to be strengthened in them. This strength enabled her to sit down and dictate a letter to her mother, declaring her intention, and justifying it by such arguments as were presented by the ingenious demon who assists always in the councils of the erring heart.

She placed this letter in her bosom, that it might be found upon her person. It was curious to observe, next, that she proceeded to tasks which were scarcely in unison with the dreadful deed she meditated. She put her chamber in nice order. Her books, of which she had a tolerably handsome collection for a private library in our forest-country, she arranged and properly classed upon their shelves. Then she made her toilet with unusual care. It was for the last time. She gazed upon the mirror, and beheld her own beauties with a shudder.

“Ah!” she thought, though she gave no expression to the thought, “to be so beautiful, yet fail!”

It was a reflection to touch any heart with sorrow. Her dress was of plain white; she wore no ornament—not even a riband. Her hair, which was beautifully long and thick, was disposed in a clubbed mass upon her head, very simply but with particular neatness; and, when all was done, concealing the weapon of death beneath a shawl which she wrapped around her, she left the house, and stole away unobserved along the hills, in the seclusion and sacred silence of which she sought to avoid the evil consequences of one crime by the commission of another far more heinous.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SUSPENSE AND AGONY.

AT the risk of seeming monotonous, we must repeat the reflection made in our last chapter, that the things we are about to lose for ever seem always more valuable in the moment of their loss. They acquire a newer interest in our eyes at such a time, possibly under the direction of some governing instinct which is intended to render us tenacious of life to the very last. Privation teaches us much more effectually than possession the value of all human enjoyments; and the moralist has more than once drawn his sweetest portraits of liberty from the gloom and the denials of a dungeon. How eloquent of freedom is he who yearns for it in vain! How glowing is that passion which laments the lost!

To one dying, as we suppose few die, in the perfect possession of their senses, how beautiful must seem the fading hues of the sunlight, flickering along the walls of a chamber! how heavenly the brief glimpses of the blue sky through the half-opened window! how charming the green bit of foliage that swings against the pane! how cheering and unwontedly sweet and balmy the soft, sudden gust of the sweet south, breathing up from the flowers, and stirring the loose drapery around the couch! How can we part with these without tears? how reflect, without horror, upon the close coffin, the damp clod, the deep hollows of the earth in which we are to be cabined? Oh, with what earnestness, at such

a moment, must the wholly conscious spirit pray for life! how greedily will he drink the nauseous draught in the hope to secure its boon! how fondly will he seize upon every chimera, whether of his own or of another's fancy, in order to gain a little respite—in order still to keep within the grasp of mind and sight, these lovely agents of earth and its Master, which, in our day of strength and exultation, we do not value at one half their worth! And how full of dread and horror must be that first awful conviction which assures him that the struggle is in vain—that the last remedy is tried—that nothing is left him now but despair—despair and death! Then it is that Christianity comes to his relief. If he believes, he gains by his loss. Its godlike promise assures him then that the things which his desires make dear, his faith has rendered immortal.

The truth of many of these reflections made their way into the mind of Margaret Cooper, as she pursued the well-known path along the hills. She observed the objects along the route more narrowly than ever. She was taking that path for the last time. Her eyes would behold these objects no more. How often had she pursued the same route with Alfred Stevens! But then she had not seen these things; she had not observed these thousand graces and beauties of form and shadow which now seemed to crowd around, challenging her regard and demanding her sympathies. Then she had seen nothing but him. The bitterness which this reflection occasioned made her hurry her footsteps; but there was an involuntary shudder that passed through her frame, when, in noting the strange beauty of the path, she reflected that it would be trodden by her for the last time. Her breathing became quickened by the reflection. She pressed forward up the hills. The forests grew thick around her—deep, dim, solemn, and inviting. The skies above looked down in little blessed blue tufts, through the crowding tree-tops. The long vista of the woods led her onward in wandering thoughts.

To fix these thoughts—to keep them from wandering! This was a difficulty. Margaret Cooper strove to do so, but she could not. Never did her mind seem such a perfect chaos—so full of confused and confusing objects and images. Her whole life seemed to pass in review before her. All her dreams of ambition, all the struggles of her genius! Were these to be thrown away? Were these all to be wasted? Was her song to be unheard? Was her passionate and proud soul to have no voice? If death is terrible to man, it is terrible, not as a pang, but as an oblivion; and to the soul of genius, oblivion is a soul-death, and its thought is a source of tenfold terror.

“But of what avail were life to me now? Even should I live,” said the wretched woman, “would it matter more to the ambition which I have had, and to the soul which flames and fevers within me? Who would hearken to the song of the degraded? Who, that heard the story of my shame, would listen to the strains of my genius? Say that its utterance is even as proud as my own vanity of heart would esteem it—say that no plaint like mine had ever touched the ear or lifted the heart of humanity! Alas! of what avail! The finger of scorn would be uplifted long before the voice of applause. The sneer and sarcasm of the worldling would anticipate the favoring judgment of the indulgent and the wise. Who would do justice to my cause? Who listen? Alas! the voice of genius would be of little avail speaking from the lips of the dishonored.

“To the talent which I have, and the ambition which still burns within me, life then can bring nothing—no exercise—no fruition. Suppose, then, that the talent is left to slumber—the ambition stifled till it has no further longings! Will life yield anything to the mere creature of society—to my youth—to my beauty—to my sense of delight—if still there be any such sense left to me? Shall I be less the creature of social scorn, because I have yielded my ambition—because I have forborne the employment of

those glorious gifts which Heaven in its bounty has allotted me?

“Alas! no! am I not a woman, one of that frail, feeble sex, whose name is weakness?—of whom, having no strength, man yet expects the proofs of the most unyielding—of a firmness which he himself can not exercise—of a power of self-denial and endurance of which he exhibits no example. If I weep, he smiles at my weakness. If I stifle my tears, he denounces my unnatural hardihood. If I am cold and unyielding, I am masculine and neglected—if I am gentle and pliant, my confidence is abused and my person dishonored. What can society, which is thus exacting, accord to me, then, as a mere woman? What shame will it not thrust upon me—a woman—and as I am?

“Life then promises me nothing. The talent which I have, lies within me idle and without hope of use. The pure name of the woman is lost to me for ever. Shame dogs my footsteps. Scorn points its finger. Life, and all that it brings to others—love, friends, fame, fortune—which are the soul of life—these are lost to me for ever. The moral death is here already. The mere act of dying, is simply the end of a strife, and a breathing and an agony. That is all!”

The day became overcast. A cloud obscured the sunlight. The blue tufts of sky no longer looked downward through the openings of the trees. The scene, dim and silent before, became unusually dark. The aspect of nature seemed congenial with the meditated deed. She had reasoned herself into its commission, and she reproached herself mentally with her delay. Any self-suggestion of an infirmity of purpose, with a nature such as hers, would have produced precipitation. She turned down a slight gorge among the hills where the forest was more close. She knelt beneath a tree and laid down her pistol at its foot.

She knelt—strange contradiction!—she knelt for the purposes of prayer. But she could not pray. It would

seem that she attributed this effort to the sight of the pistols, and she put them behind her without changing her position. The prayer, if she made any, was internal; and, at all events it did not seem to be satisfactory. Yet, before it was ended, she started with an expression of painful thought upon her face. The voice of her reason had ceased its utterance. The voice of her conscience, perhaps, had been unheard; but there was yet another voice to be heard which was more potent than all.

It was the mother's voice!

She placed her hand upon her side with a spasmodic effort. The quickening of a new life within her, made that new voice effectual. She threw herself on the ground and wept freely. For the first time she wept freely. The tears were those of the mother. The true fountain of tears had been touched. That first throb of the innocent pledge of guilty passion subdued the fiend. She could have taken her own life, but dared not lift the deadly weapon against that. The arm of the suicide was arrested. She groaned, she wept, bitterly and freely. She was at once feebler and more strong. Feebler, as regarded her late resolution; stronger as regarded the force of her affections, the sweet humanities, not altogether subdued within her heart. The slight pulsation of that infant in her womb had been more effectual than the voice of reason, or conscience, or feminine dread. The maternal feeling is, perhaps, the most imperious of all those which gather in the heart of woman.

Margaret Cooper, however, had not altogether resolved against the deed. She only could not do it there and then. Her wretched determination was not wholly surrendered, but it was touched, enfeebled; and with the increasing powers of reflection, the impetuosity of the will became naturally lessened. Those few glimpses along the roadside which had made her sensible to the beauties she was about to lose, had prepared her mind to act in counteraction of her impulse; and the event which had brought into

play the maternal instinct, naturally helped the cause of reason in her soul.

Still, with the erring pride of youth she reproached herself with her infirmity of purpose. She resolved to change her ground, as if the instinct which had been awakened in one spot would not everywhere pursue her. Time was gained, and in such cases, to gain time is everything. Perhaps no suicide would ever take place if the individual would wait ten minutes. The soul takes its color from the cloud, and changes its moods as often. It is one of the best lessons to the young, to wait! wait! wait! One of the surest signs of strength is where the individual waits patiently and makes no complaint.

Margaret Cooper changed her ground. The spot was a wild one. A broken ledge of rock was at her feet, and just below it ran a dark, narrow winding footpath half-obscured by the undergrowth. Here she once more proceeded to nerve her mind for the commission of the deed, but she had not been there an instant when she was surprised to hear the sound of voices.

This was unusual. Who could they be? The villagers were not apt to stray from church-service whenever a preacher was to be found, and there was a new one, and consequently a new attraction, that day, for the spiritual hungry of Charlemont. The path below was seldom trodden except by herself and an occasional sportsman. The idea that entered her mind was, that her purpose had been suspected, and that she was pursued.

With this idea, she placed the pistol to her breast. She had already cocked the weapon. Her finger was on the trigger. But the tones of another voice reached her ears from below. They were those of a woman—sweet, musical, and tender.

A new light broke in upon her mind. This was the language of love. And who were these new lovers in Charlemont? Could it be that the voice of the male speaker was

that of Stevens? Something in the tone sounded like it. Involuntarily, with this impression, the weapon was turned from her own bosom, and addressed in the direction in which the persons below were approaching. A sudden, joyous feeling touched her soul. The thought to destroy the criminal by whom she had been destroyed was a source of exultation. She felt that she could do it. Both pistols were in her hand. The pathway was not more than twenty paces distant; and her nerves, for the first time, braced to an unusual tension, trembled with the new excitement in her soul.

The intruders continued to approach. Their voices became more distinct, and Margaret Cooper was soon undeceived as to one of them being that of Alfred Stevens. She was compelled to lie close, that she might not betray her position and purpose. The male speaker was very urgent; the voice seemed that of a stranger. That of the female was not so clearly distinguishable, yet it seemed more familiar to the unintentional listener.

Something of feminine curiosity now entered the bosom of Margaret Cooper. Crouching where she was, she deposited the pistols at her feet. She remained breathlessly, for the slightest movement would have revealed her to the persons who were now just below. They passed close beneath the place of her concealment, and she soon discovered that they were lovers; and what their language was, even if she had not heard it, might have been conjectured.

The girl was a very pretty brunette of Charlemont—a sweet, retiring damsel of her own age, named Rivers—whom she knew only slightly. She was a shy, gentle, un-presuming girl, whom, for this reason, perhaps, Margaret had learned to look upon without dislike or scorn. Her companion was a youth whom Margaret had known when a lad, but who had been absent on the Mississippi for two years. His tall and masculine but well-made and graceful person sufficiently accounted for, while it justified, the taste

of the maiden. He was a youth of fine, frank, manly countenance. His garb was picturesque, that of a bold border-hunter, with hunting-frock of yellow buckskin, and Indian leggings.

The girl looked up to him with an expression at once of eagerness and timidity. Confidence and maiden bashfulness spoke equally in the delight which glowed upon her features. The bright eyes and sun-burned features of the youth were flushed with the feeling of happy triumph and assuring love. The relation of the two was sufficiently evident from their looks, even had they no other language.

What were the emotions of Margaret Cooper as she looked down upon this pair? At first she thought, as will most persons: "Surely there is nothing in nature so lovely as the union of two fond, devoted hearts. The picture is one equally of moral and physical beauty. The slight, fragile, depending damsel, hanging in perfect confidence on the arm of the manly, lofty, and exulting youth—looking up into his eyes in hope, while he returns the gaze with pride and fondness! Unconscious of all things but the love which to them is life and all things besides, they move along the forest way and know not its solitude; they linger and loiter along its protracted paths, and see not their length; they cling together through the lengthened hours, and fancy they have lost no time; they hear each other's voices, and believe that life is all music and delight."

While Margaret Cooper looked down and heard the pleadings and promises of the youth, and beheld the sweet emotions of his companion, engaged in a pleasant struggle between her hopes and misgivings, she scarcely restrained herself from rising where she was and crying aloud—like another Cassandra, not to be believed: "Beware! beware!"

But the warning of Margaret Cooper would have been unnecessary. The girl was not only free from danger, but she was superior to it. She had the wholesome fear of doing wrong too strongly impressed upon her by education

—she had too little confidence in herself—was too well assured of her own weakness—to suffer herself, even for a moment, to depart, in either thought or deed, from those quiet but stern proprieties of conduct which are among the best securities of the young. While she looked in her lover's face with confidence, and held his arm with the grasp of one who is sure of a right to do so, there was an air of childish simplicity in her manner which was wholly at variance with wild passions and improper fancies. While the hunter maintained her on his arm, and looked down into her eyes with love, his glance was yet as respectful, as unexpressive of presumption, as her own. Had the eyes of all Charlemont been looking on, they would have beheld nothing in the conduct of either which could have incurred the censure of the most becoming delicacy.

Keen was the emotion and bitter was the thought which worked in the mind of Margaret Cooper. She looked on the deportment of that young maiden, whose intellect at another day she would have despised, with envy and regret. Truer thoughts and feelings came to her as she listened to the innocent but fond dialogue between the unconscious pair. The hunter was pursuing an erratic life of enterprise and industry, then very common among the western youth. He had been down upon the Mississippi, seeking his fortune in such adventures as make border-life in our country something like the more civilized life of the middle ages. He had returned after a long absence, to claim the bride whose affections he had won long before he had departed.

Never had knight-errant been more true to his mistress. Her image had been his talisman as well against danger from without, as against the demon within. It had never left his mind, and he now returned for his reward. He had returned to Charlemont just before the church service had begun, and, being unprepared to go thither, had found no difficulty in persuading his sweetheart to give the hour of morning service to himself.

Mixed up with his professions of love was the story of his wanderings. Never were adventures more interesting to any auditor. Never was auditor more easily moved by the transitions of the tale from tears to smiles, and from smiles again to tears. His risks and rewards; his defeats and successes; his wild adventures by fell and flood—not perhaps so perilous as those of Othello, but such as proved he had the soul to encounter the worst in Othello's experience, and maintain himself as well—drew largely on the maiden's wonder and delight, increased her tenderness and tremors, and made her quite as devoted to her hero as ever was Desdemona to her dusky chief. As they went from hearing below, the manner in which the hunter concluded his narrative provided a sufficient test for the faith of his companion.

“And now, Selina, you see all the risks and the dangers. There's work and perhaps trouble for you to go down with me along the Choctaw borders. But if there's work, I am the man to do my own share, and help you out in yours; and, if there's trouble, here's the breast to stand it first, and here's the arm to drive it back, so that it'll never trouble yours. No danger shall come to you, so long as I can stand up between it and you. If so be that you love me as you say, there's one way to show it: you'll soon make up your mind to go with me. If you don't, why—”

“But you know I do love you, John—” murmured the girl.

“Don't I believe it? Well, if what you say means what it should, you're ready. Here's my hand, and all that it's good for. It can work for you and fight for you, Selina, and it's yours eternally, with all that I have.”

The hand of the girl was silently put into that of the speaker. The tears were in her eyes; but, if she made any other answer, it was unheard by Margaret Cooper. The rustic pair moved from sight even as they spoke, and the desolate woman once more remained alone!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SHAME AND DEATH—THE OATH.

MARGARET COOPER was at length permitted to emerge from the place of her concealment. The voices of the lovers were lost, as well as their forms, in the wooded distance. Dreaming, like children as they were, of life and happiness, they had wandered off, too happy to fancy for a moment that the world contained, in its wide, vast bosom, one creature half so wretched as she who hung above them, brooding, like some wild bird of the cliff, over the storm which had robbed her of her richest plumage.

She sank back into the woods. She no longer had the heart to commit the meditated crime. This purpose had left her mind. It had given place to another, however, scarcely less criminal. We have seen her, under the first impression that the stranger whose voice she heard was Alfred Stevens, turning the muzzle of the pistol from her breast to the path on which he was approaching. Though she discovered her error, and laid the weapon down, the sudden suggestion of her mind, at that moment, gave a new direction to her mood.

Why should she not seek to avenge her wrong? Was he to escape without penalty? was she to be a quiescent victim? True, she was a woman, destined it would seem to suffer—perhaps with a more than ordinary share of that suffering which falls to her sex. But she had also a peculiar strength—the strength of a man in some respects; and

in her bosom she now felt the sudden glow of one of his fiercest passions. Revenge might be in her power. She might redress her wrong by her own hand. It was a weapon of death which she grasped. In her grasp it might be made a weapon of power. The suggestion seemed to be that of justice only. It was one that filled her whole soul with a triumphant and a wild enthusiasm.

“I shall not be stricken down without danger to mine enemy. For *this*—this, at least—strength is allotted me. Let him tremble! In his place of seeming security let him tremble! I shall pursue his steps. I will find him out. There shall be a day of retribution! Alfred Stevens, there is a power within me which tells me you are no longer safe!

“And why may I not secure this justice—this vengeance? Why? Because I am a woman. Ha! We shall see. If I am a woman, I can be an enemy—and such an enemy! An enemy not to be appeased, not to be overcome. War always with my foe—war to the knife—war to the last!”

Such a nature as that of Margaret Cooper needed some such object to give it the passionate employment without which it must recoil upon itself and end either in suicide or madness. She brooded upon this new thought. She found in it a grateful exercise. From the moment when she conceived the idea of being the avenger of her own wrong, her spirit became more elastic—she became less sensible to the possible opinions upon her condition which might be entertained by others. She found consolation, in retreating to this one thought, from all the rest. Of the difficulties in the way of her design, it was not in her impetuous character to think. She never once suspected that the name of Alfred Stevens had been an assumed one. She never once asked how she was to pursue and hunt him up. She thought of a male disguise for herself, it is true; but of the means and modes of travel—in what direction to go,

and after what plan to conduct her pursuit, she had not the most distant idea.

She addressed herself to her new design, however, in one respect, with amazing perseverance. It diverted her from other and more oppressive thoughts. Her pistols she carried secretly to a very distant wood, where she concealed them in the hollow of a tree. To this wood she repaired secretly and daily. Here she selected a tree as a mark. A small section of the bark, which she tore away, at a given height, she learned to regard as the breast of her seducer. This was the object of her aim. Without any woman fears, she began her practice and continued it, day by day, until, as we are told by one of the chroniclers of her melancholy story, "she could place a ball with an accuracy, which, were it universally equalled by modern duellists, would render duelling much more fatal than it commonly is."

In secret she procured gunpowder and lead, by arts so ingenious as to baffle detection. At midnight when her mother slept she moulded her bullets. Well might the thoughts and feelings which possessed her mind, while engaged in this gloomy labor, have endowed every bullet with a wizard spell to make it do its bidding truly. Bitter, indeed, were the hours so appropriated; but they had their consolations. Dark and terrible were the excited moods in which she retired from her toils to that slumber which she could not always secure. And when it did come, what were its images! The tree, the mark, the weapon, the deep, dim forest, all the scenes and trials of the day, were renewed in her sleep. A gloomy wood filled her eyes—a victim dabbled in blood lay before her; and, more than once, her own fearful cry of vengeance and exultation awakened her from those dreams of sleep, which strengthened her in the terrible pursuit of the object which occasioned them.

Such thoughts and practices, continued with religious

pertinacity, from day to day, necessarily had their effect upon her appearance as well as her character. Her beauty assumed a wilder aspect. Her eye shot forth a supernatural fire. She never smiled. Her mouth was rigid and compressed as if her heart was busy in an endless conflict. Her gloom, thus nurtured by solitude and the continual presence of a brooding imagination of revenge, darkened into something like ferocity. Her utterance became brief and quick—her tones sharp, sudden, and piercing. She had but one thought which never seemed to desert her, yet of this thought no ear ever had cognizance. It was of the time when she should exercise the skill which she had now acquired upon that destroyer of herself, whom she now felt herself destined to destroy.

Of course we are describing a madness—one of those peculiar forms of the disease which seems to have its origin in natural and justifiable suggestions of reason. Not the less a madness for all that.

Succeeding in her practice at one distance, Margaret Cooper changed it. From one point to another she constantly varied her practice, until her aim grew certain at almost any distance within the ordinary influence of the weapon. To strike her mark at thirty feet became, in a little while, quite as easy as to do so at five; and, secure now of her weapon, her next object—though there was no cessation of her practice—was how to seek and where to find the victim.

In this new object she meditated to disguise herself in the apparel of a man. She actually commenced the making up of the several garments of one. This was also the secret labor of the midnight hour, when her feeble-minded mother slept. She began to feel some of the difficulties lying in the way of this pursuit, and her mind grew troubled to consider them, without however, relaxing in its determination. That seemed a settled matter.

While she brooded over this new feature of her purpose

—as if fortunately to arrest the mad design—her mother fell seriously sick, and was for some time in danger. The duty of attending upon her, put a temporary stop to her thoughts and exercises; though without having the effect of expelling them from her mind.

But another event, upon her mother's recovery, tended to produce a considerable alteration in her thoughts. A new care filled her heart and rendered her a different being, in several respects. She was soon to become a mother. The sickness of soul which oppressed her under this conviction, gave a new direction to her mood without lessening its bitterness; and, in proportion as she found her vengeance delayed, so was the gratification which it promised, a heightened desire in her mind.

For the humiliating and trying event which was at hand, Margaret Cooper prepared with a degree of silent firmness which denoted quite as strongly the resignation of despair as any other feeling.

The child is born.

Margaret Cooper has at length become a mother. She has suffered the agony, without being able to feel the compensating pride and pleasure of one. It was the witness of her shame—could she receive it with any assurances of love? It is doubtful if she did.

For some time after its birth, the hapless woman seemed to be unconscious, or half-conscious only, of her charge. A stupor weighed upon her senses. When she did awaken, and her eyes fell upon the face and form of the infant with looks of recognition, one long, long piercing shriek burst from her lips. She closed her eyes—she turned away from the little unoffending, yet offensive object with a feeling of horror.

Its features were those of Alfred Stevens. The likeness was indelible; and this identity drew upon the child a share of that loathing hatred with which she now remembered the guilty father.

It may very well be supposed that the innocent babe suffered under these circumstances. The milk which it drew from the mother's breast, was the milk of bitterness, and it did not thrive. It imbibed gall instead of nutriment. Day after day it pined in hopeless misery; and though the wretched mother strove to supply its wants and soothe its little sorrows, with a gradually increasing interest which overcame her first loathing, there was yet that want of sweetest sympathy which nothing merely physical could well supply.

Debility was succeeded by disease—fever preyed upon its little frame, which was now reduced to a skeleton. One short month only had elapsed from its birth, and it lay, in the silence of exhaustion upon the arm of its mother. Its eyes, whence the flickering light was escaping fast, looked up into hers, as she fancied, with an expression of reproach. She felt, on the instant, the pang of the maternal conscience. She forgot the unworthy father, as she thought of the neglectful mother. She bent down, and, for the first time, imprinted on its little lips the maternal kiss.

A smile seemed to glimmer on its tiny features; and, from that moment, Margaret Cooper resolved to forget her injuries, for the time, at least, in the consideration of her proper duties. But her resolution came too late. Even while her nipple was within its boneless gums, a change came over the innocent. She did not heed it. Her eyes and thoughts were elsewhere; and thus she mused, gazing vacantly upon the wall of her chamber until her mother entered the room. Mrs. Cooper gave but a single glance at the infant when she saw that its little cares were over.

“Oh, Margaret!” she exclaimed, “the child is dead.”

The mother looked down with a start and shudder. A big tear fell from her eyes upon the cold cheek of the innocent. She released it to her mother, turned her face upon the couch, and uttered her thanks to Heaven that had so

decreed it—that had left her again free for that darker purpose which had so long filled her mind.

“Better so,” she murmured to her mother. “It is at peace. It will neither know its own nor its mother’s griefs. It is free from that shame for which I must live!”

“Come now, Margaret, no more of that,” said the mother sharply. “There’s no need of shame. There are other things to live for besides shame.”

“There are—there are!” exclaimed the daughter, with spasmodic energy. “Were there not, I should, indeed, be desperate.”

“To be sure you would, my child. You have a great deal to live for yet; and let a little time blow over, and when everything’s forgotten, you will get as good a husband as any girl in the country.”

“For Heaven’s sake, mother, none of this?”

“But why not! Though you are looking a little bad just now—quite pale and broken—yet it’s only because you have been so ill; and this nursing of babies, and having ’em too, is a sort of business to make any young woman look bad; but in spite of all, there’s not a girl in the village, no matter how fresh she may be looking, that can hold a candle to you.”

“For mercy, mother!——”

“Let me speak, I tell you! Don’t I know? You’re young, and you’ll get over it. You will get all your beauty and good looks back, now that the baby’s out of the way, and there’s no more nursing to be done. And what with your beauty and your talents, Margaret——”

“Peace! mother! Peace—peace! You will drive me to madness if you continue to speak thus.”

“Well, I’m sure there’s no knowing what to say to please you. I’m sure, I only want to cheer you up, and to convince you that things are not so bad as you think them now. The cloud will blow over soon, and everything will be for gotten, and then, you see——”

The girl waved her hand impatiently.

"Death—death!" she exclaimed. "Oh! child of shame, and bitterness, and wrath!" she murmured, kneeling down beside the infant, "thou art the witness that I have no future but storm, and cloud, and wrath, and—Vengeance!"

The last word was inaudible to her mother's ears.

"It is an oath!" she cried; "an oath!" And her hands were uplifted in solemn adjuration.

"Come—come, Margaret! none of this swearing. You frighten me with your swearing. There's nothing that you need to swear about! What's done can't be helped now, by taking it so seriously. You must only be patient, and give yourself time. Time's the word for us now; after a little while you'll see the sky become brighter. It's a bad business, it's true; but it needn't break a body's heart. How many young girls I've known in my time, that's been in the same fix. There was Janet Bonner, and Emma Loring, and Mary Peters—I knew 'em all, very well. Well, they all made a slip once in their lives, and they never broke their hearts about it, and didn't look very pale and sad in the face either; but they just kept quiet and behaved decent for awhile, and every one of 'em got good husbands. Janet Bonner, she married Dick Pyatt, who came from Massachusetts, and kept the school down by Clayton's Meadow; Emma Loring married a baptist-preacher from Virginia, named Stokes. I never saw him to know him; and as for Mary Peters, there never was a girl that had a slip that was ever so fortunate, for she's been married no less than three times since, and as she's a widow again, there's no telling what may happen to her yet. So don't you be so downcast. You're chance is pretty nigh as good as ever, if you will only hold up your head, and put the best face on it."

"Oh! torture—torture! Mother, will you not be silent?"

Let the dead speak to me only. I would hear but the voice of this one witness——”

And she communed only with the dead infant, sitting or kneeling beside it. But the communion was not one of contrition or tears—not of humility and repentance—not of self-reproach and a broken spirit. Pride and other passions had summoned up deities and angels of terror and of crime, before the eyes and thoughts of the wretched mourner, and the demon who had watched with her and waited on her, and had haunted her with taunt and bitter mockeries, night and day, was again busy with terrible suggestions, which gradually grew to be divine laws to her diseased imagination.

“Yes!” she exclaimed unconsciously.

“I hear! I obey! Yet speak again. Repeat the lesson. I must learn it every syllable, so that I shall not mistake—so that I can not fail!”

“Who are you talking to, Margaret?” asked the mother anxiously.

“Do you not see them, where they go? There—through the doors; the open windows—wrapped in shadows, with great wings at their shoulders, each carrying a dart in his bony grasp.”

“Lord, have mercy! She’s losing her senses again!” and the mother was about to rush from the apartment to seek assistance; but with the action, the daughter suddenly arose, wearing a look of singular calmness, and motioning to the child, she said:—

“Will you not dress it for the grave?”

“I’m going about it now. The poor lovely little creature. The innocent little blossom. We must put it in white, Margaret—virgin white—and put white flowers in its little hands and on its breast, and under its head. Oh! it will look so sweet in its little coffin!”

“God! I should go mad with all this!” exclaimed the daughter. “were it not for that work which is before me!

I must be calm for that—calm and stern! I must not hear—I must not think—not feel—lest I forget myself, and the deed which I have to do. That oath—that oath! It is sworn! It is registered in heaven, by the fatal angels of remorse, and wrath, and vengeance!”

And again, a whisper at her ears repeated:—

“For this, Margaret, and for this only, must thou live?”

“I must! I will!” she muttered, as it were in reply, and her eye glared upon the opened door, as she heard a voice and footsteps without; and the thought smote her:—

“Should it be now! Come for the sacrifice! Ha!”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE PALL UPON THE COFFIN.

THE noise which arrested the attention of Margaret Cooper, and kindled her features into an expression of wild and fiery ferocity, was of innocent origin. The widow Thackeray was the intruder. Her kindness, sympathy, and unwearied attentions, so utterly in conflict with the estimates hitherto made of her heart and character, by Mrs Cooper, had, in some degree, disarmed the censures of that excellent mother, if they had not wholly changed her sentiments. She professed to be very grateful to Thackeray's attentions, and, without making any profession, Margaret certainly showed her that she felt them. She now only pointed the widow to the corpse of the child, in that one action telling to the other all that was yet unknown. Then she seated herself composedly, folded her hands, and, beside the corpse, forgot its presence, forgot the presence of all—heard no voice, save that of the assiduous demon whom nothing could expel from her companionship.

“Poor little thing!” murmured the widow Thackeray, as she proceeded to assist Mrs. Cooper in decking it for the grave.

The duty was finally done. Its burial was appointed for the morrow.

A village funeral is necessarily an event of some importance. The lack of excitements in small communities, in

vests even sorrow and grief and death with a peculiar interest in the eyes of curiosity. On the present occasion, all the villagers attended. The funeral itself might have sufficed to collect them with few exceptions; but now there was a more eager influence still, working upon the gossipy moods of the population. To see Margaret Cooper in her affliction—to see that haughty spirit humbled and made ashamed—was, we fear, a motive, in the minds of many, much stronger than the ostensible occasion might have awakened. Had Margaret been a fashionable woman, in a great city, she might have disappointed the vulgar desire, by keeping to her chamber. Nay, even according to the free-and-easy standards prevailing at Charlemont, she might have done the same thing, and incurred no additional scandal.

It was, indeed, to the surprise of a great many, that she made her appearance. It was still more a matter of surprise—nay, pious and virgin horror—that she seemed to betray neither grief nor shame, surrounded as she was by all whom she knew, and all, in particular, whom, in the day of her pride, she had kept at a distance.

“What a brazen creature!” whispered Miss Jemima Parkinson, an interesting spinster of thirty-six, to Miss Ellen Broadhurst, who was only thirty-four; and Miss Ellen whispered back, in reply:—

“She hasn’t the slightest bit of shame!”

Interesting virgins! they had come to gloat over the spectacle of shame. To behold the agonizing sense of degradation declare itself under the finger-pointing scorn of those who, perhaps, were only innocent from necessity, and virtuous because of the lack of the necessary attractions in the eyes of lust.

But Margaret Cooper seemed quite as insensible to their presence as to their scorn and her own shame. She, in truth, saw none of them. She heard not their voices. She conjectured none of their comments. She had anticipated

all of them; and having, in consequence, reached a point of intensity in her agony which could bear no addition, she had been relieved only by a still more intense passion, by which the enfeebling one, of mere society, stood rebuked and almost forgotten.

They little dreamed the terrible thoughts which were working, beneath that stolid face, in that always eager-working brain. They never fancied what a terrible demon now occupied that fiery heart which they supposed was wholly surrendered to the consciousness of shame. Could they have heard that voice of the fiend whispering in her ears, while they whispered to one another—heard his terrible exhortations—heard her no less terrible replies—they would have shrunk away in horror, and felt fear rather than exultation.

Margaret Cooper was insensible to all that they could say or do. She knew them well—knew what they would say, and feel, and do; but the very extremity of her suffering had placed it out of their power any longer to mortify or shame.

Some few of the villagers remained away. Ned Hinkley and his widowed sister were absent from the house, though they occupied obscure places in the church when the funeral-procession took place. An honorable pity kept them from meeting the eyes of the poor shame-stricken but not shame-showing woman.

And Margaret followed the little corpse to its quiet nook in the village graveyard. In that simple region the procession was wholly on foot; and she walked behind the coffin as firmly as if she knew not what it held. There was a single shiver that passed over her frame, as the heavy clods fell upon the coffin-lid—but that was all; and when her mother and the widow Thackeray took each of them one of her arms, and led her away from the grave, and home, she went quietly, calmly, it would seem, and with as firm a step as ever!

"She has not a bit of feeling!" said Miss Jemima to Miss Ellen.

"That's always the case with your very smart women," was the reply. "It's all head with 'em; there's no heart. They can talk fine things about death, and sorrow, and affliction, but it's talk only. They don't feel what they say."

Ned Hinkley had a juster notion of the state of the poor victim—of her failings and her sensibilities, her equal strength and weakness.

"Now," said he to his sister, "there's a burning volcano in that woman's heart, that will tear her some day to pieces. For all that coldness, and calmness, and stateliness, her brain is on fire, and her heart ready for a convulsion. Her thoughts now, if she thinks at all, are all desperate. She's going through a very hell upon earth! When you think of her pride—and she's just as proud now as the devil himself—her misfortune hasn't let her down—only made her more fierce—you wonder that she lets herself be seen; you wonder that she lives at all. I only wonder that she hasn't thrown herself from the rocks and into the lake. She'll do it yet, I'm a-thinking.

"And just so she always was. I knew her long ago. She once told me she was afraid of nothing—would do as she pleased—she could dare anything! From that moment I saw she wasn't the girl for Bill Hinkley. I told him so, but he was so crazy after her, he'd hear to nothing. A woman—a young woman—a mere girl of fifteen—boasting that she can dare and do things that would set any woman in a shiver! I tell you what, sis, the woman that's bolder than her sex is always in danger of falling from the rocks. She gets such a conceit of her mind, that the devil is always welcome. Her heart, after that, stands no sort of chance!

"Protect me, say I, from all that class of women that pride themselves on their strongmindedness! They get

insolent upon it. They think that mind can do everything. They're so vain, that they never can see the danger, even when it's yawning at their feet. A woman's never safe unless she's scary of herself, and mistrusts herself, and never lets her thoughts and fancies get from under a tight rein of prudence. For, after all, the passions will have their way some day, and then what's the use of the mind? I tell you, sis, that the passions are born deaf—they never listen to any argument.

“But I'm sorry for her—God knows I'm sorry for her! I'd give all I'm worth to have a fair shot or clip at that rascal Stevens. Brother Stevens! Ain't it monstrous, now, that a sheep's cover should be all that's sufficient to give the wolf freedom in the flock?—that you've only to say, ‘This is a brother—a man of God’—and no proof is asked! nobody questions! The blind, beastly, bigoted, blathering blockheads! I feel very much like setting off straight, and licking John Hinkley, though he's my own uncle, within an inch of his life! He and John Cross—the old fools who are so eager to impose their notions of religion upon everybody, that anybody may impose upon them—they two have destroyed this poor young creature. It's at their door, in part, this crime, and this ruin! I feel it in my heart to lick 'em both out of their breeches!

“Yet, as I'm a living sinner, they'll stand up in the congregation, and exhort about this poor girl's misfortune, just as if they were not to blame at all who brought the wolf into the farmyard! They'll talk about her sins, and not a word, to themselves or anybody else, about their own stupidities! I feel it in my heart to lather both of them right away!”

The sister said little, and sorrowfully walked on in silence homeward, listening to the fierce denunciations of Ned Hinkley. Ned was affected, or, rather, he showed his sympathies, in a manner entirely his own. He was so much for fight, that he totally forgot his fiddle that night, and

amused himself by putting his two "barking-pups" in order—getting them ready, as he said, "in case he ever should get a crack at Brother Stevens!"

The cares of the child's burial over, and the crowd dispersed, the cottage of the widow Cooper was once more abandoned to the cheerlessness and woe within. Very dismal was the night of that day to the two, the foolish mother and wretched daughter, as they sat brooding together, in deep silence, by the light of a feeble candle. The mother rocked a while in her easy-chair. The daughter, hands clasped in her lap, sat watching the candlelight in almost idiotic vacancy of gaze. At length she stood up and spoke—slowly, deliberately, and apparently in as calm a mood as she had ever felt in all her life:—

"We must leave this place, mother. We must go hence—to-morrow if we can."

"Go?—leave this place? I want to know why! I'm sure we're very comfortable here. I can't be going just when you please, and leaving all my company and friends."

"Friends!"

"Yes, friends! There's the widow Thackeray—and there's—"

"And how long is it since Mrs. Thackeray was such a dear friend, mother?" asked the daughter, with ill-suppressed scorn.

"No matter how long: she's a good friend now. She's not so foolish as she used to be. She's grown good; she's got religion; and I don't consider what she was. No!—I'm willing—"

"Pshaw, mother! tell me nothing of your friendships. You'll find, wherever you go, as many friends as you please, valued quite as much as Mrs. Thackeray."

"Well, I do say, Margaret, it's very ungrateful of you to speak so disrespectfully of Mrs. Thackeray, after all her kindness and attention."

"I do not speak disrespectfully of Mrs. Thackeray. I *never* did speak ill of her, even when it was your favorite practice to do so. I only speak of your newly-acquired appreciation of her. But this is nothing to the purpose. I repeat, mother, we can not remain here. I will depart, whether you resolve to go or not. I can not, I will not, exist another week in Charlemont."

"And where would you go?"

"Back — back to that old farm, from which you brought me in evil hour! It is poor, obscure, profitless, unsought, unseen: it will give me a shelter—it may bring me peace. I must have solitude for a season; I must sleep for months."

"Sleep for months! La me, child, what a notion's that!"

"No matter—thither let us go. I seem to see it, stretching out its hands, and imploring us to come."

"Bless me, Margaret! a farm stretching out its hands! Why, you're in a dream!"

"Don't wake me, then! Better I should so dream! Thither I go. It is fortunate that you have not been able to sell it. It is a mercy that it still remains to us. It was my childhood's home. Would it could again receive me as a child! It will cover my head for a while, at least, and that is something. We must leave this place. Here every thing offends me—every spot, every face, every look, every gesture."

"It's impossible, Margaret!—"

"What! you suppose it an honorable distinction, do you, when the folks here point to your daughter, and say—ha! ha!—listen what they say! It is the language of compliment! They are doing me honor, with tongue and finger! Repeat, mother; tell me what they say—for it evidently gives you great pleasure."

"O Margaret! Margaret!—"

"You understand, do you? Well, then, we go. We can not depart too soon. If I stay here, I madden! And I must not madden. I have something which needs be done

—which must be done. It is an oath! an oath in heaven! The child was a witness. She heard all—every syllable!”

“What all? what did you hear?”

“No matter! I’m sworn to be secret. But you shall hear in time. We have no time for it now. It is a very long story. And we must now be packing. Yes, we must go. I must go, at least. Shall I go alone?”

“But you will not leave your mother, Margaret!”

“Father and mother—all will I leave, in obedience to that oath. Believe me or not, mother—go with me or not—still I go. Perhaps it is better that I should go alone.”

The strong will naturally swayed the feebler, as it had ever done before. The mother submitted to an arrangement which she had not the resolution to oppose. A few days were devoted to necessary arrangements, and then they left Charlemont for ever. Margaret Cooper looked not once behind them as they traversed the lonely hills looking down upon the village—those very hills from which, at the opening of this story, the treacherous Alfred Stevens and his simple uncle beheld the lovely little settlement. She recognised the very spot, as they drove over it, where Stevens first encountered her, and the busy demon at her ears whispered:—

“It was here! You remember!”

And she clinched her teeth firmly together, even though she shuddered at her memories; and she renewed her oath to the demon, who, thereupon, kept her company the rest of the journey, till she reached the ancient and obscure farmstead in which she was born.

“She retired,” says the rude chronicle from which we have borrowed many of the materials for this sombre history, “to a romantic little farm in —, there to spend in seclusion, with her aged mother and a few servants, the remainder of her days.”

Our simple chronicler takes too much for granted. Margaret Cooper retired with no such purpose. She had pur-

poses entirely at conflict with any idea of repose or quiet. She thought nothing of the remainder of her days. Her mother was not so aged but that she could still think, six months afterward, of the reported marriage of the widow Thackeray with repining, and with the feeling of one who thinks that she has suffered neglect and injustice at the hands of the world. Touching the romance of the ancient farmstead, we are more modestly content to describe it as sterile, lonely, and unattractive; its obscurity offering, for the present, its chief attractions to our desolate heroine, and the true occasion for that deep disgust with which her amiable mother beheld it.

Our chronicle of Charlemont is ended. We have no further object or interest within its precincts. William Hinkley is gone, no one knows whither, followed by his adopted father, the retired lawyer, whose sensibilities were fatal to his success. It was not long before Ned Hinkley and his widowed sister found it their policy to depart also, seeking superior objects in another county; and at this moment Charlemont is an abandoned and deserted region. It seemed to decline from the moment when the cruel catastrophe occurred which precipitated Margaret Cooper from her pride of place. Beautiful as the village appeared at the opening of our legend, it was doomed to as rapid a decay as growth. "Something ails it now—the spot is cursed!"

But *our* history does not finally conclude with the fate of Charlemont. That chronicle is required now to give place to another, in which we propose to take up the sundered clues, and reunite them in a fresh progress. We shall meet some of the old parties once more, in new situations. We shall again meet with Margaret Cooper, in a new guise, under other aspects, but still accompanied by her demon—still inspired by her secret oath—still glowing with all the terrible memories of the past—still labor-

ing with unhallowed pride; and still destined for a dark catastrophe. Our scene, however, lies in another region, to which the reader, who has thus far kept pace with our progress, is entreated still to accompany us. The chronicle of "CHARLEMONT" will find its fitting sequel in that of "BEAUCHAMPE"—known proverbially as "THE KENTUCKY TRAGEDY."

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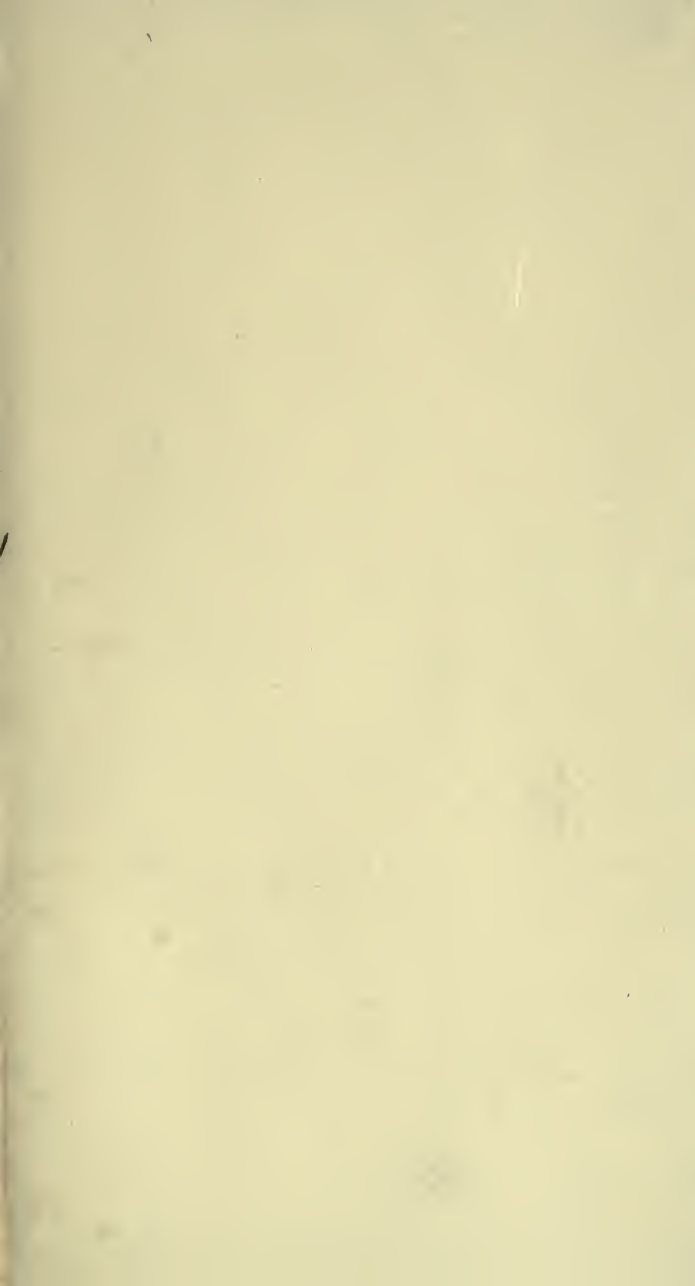
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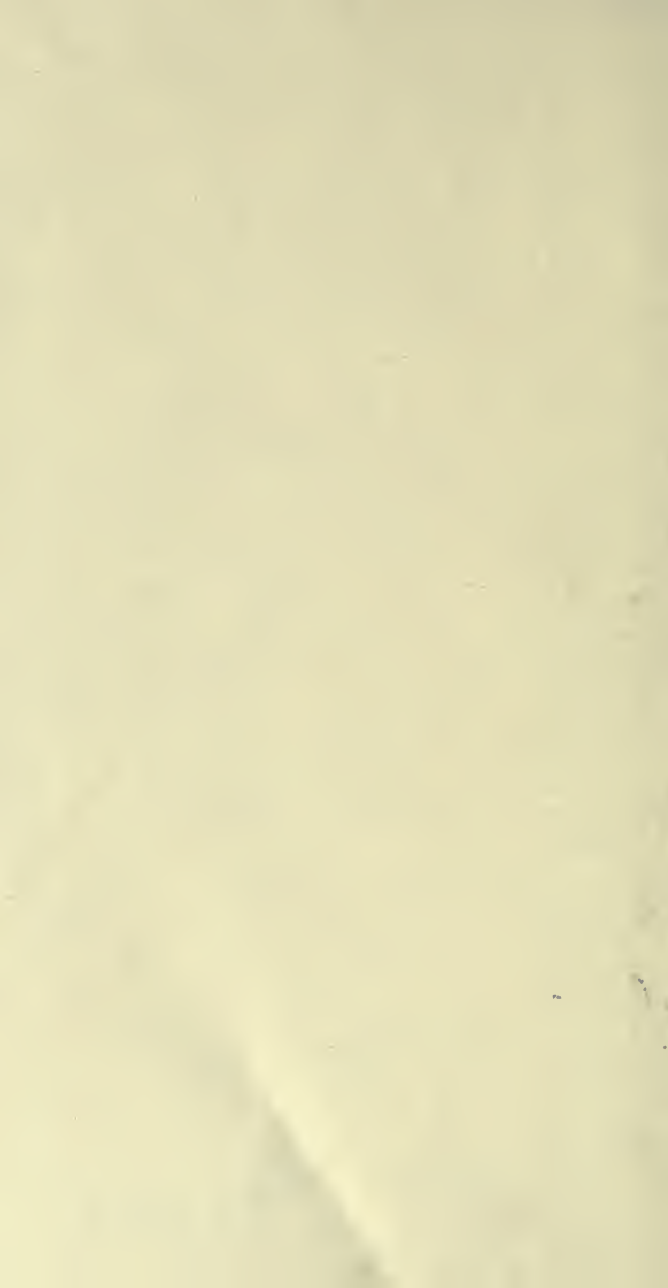
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